

An Analysis of Duan Yucai's Theory of *Shengyi tongyuan*
in his *Annotations to the Shuowen jiezi*

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Abstract

My dissertation studies the work of an eminent Qing dynasty (1644–1912) philologist named Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815). Duan is renowned for his annotations to the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Simple Graphs and Analysing Compound Characters), titled the *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Annotations to the *Explaining Simple Graphs and Analysing Compound Characters*) or the *Duanzhu* 段注 (Duan's Annotations). The *Shuowen* is the earliest systematic Chinese character dictionary from the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220), compiled around 100 CE by Xu Shen 許慎 (58–147). In his annotations to the *Shuowen*, Duan demonstrated insights into the relationship between the sound and meaning of Chinese characters. He proposed that sound and meaning spring from the same source (*shengyi tongyuan* 聲義同源) and explored the significant implications of this finding. This dissertation aims to explore how Duan engaged with the *Shuowen*, and how he proposed and applied his principles in solving exegetical problems.

Firstly, this dissertation provides an overview of related scholarship, especially focusing on the relationship between sound and meaning in Western and Chinese philology. Secondly, it contextualises Duan and his work, the *Duanzhu*, against the background of 18th-Century scholarship to evaluate Duan's significance in the intellectual developments of Qing China. Thirdly, it focuses on Duan's approach to the *Shuowen*, providing a comprehensive analysis and relevant examples of Duan's principles regarding the relationship between sound and meaning. Fourthly, it offers an application of Duan's principles in word glosses and solving exegetical problems, primarily presented in his annotations to the *Shuowen*. Lastly, it evaluates Duan's accomplishments and limitations within the context of historical perspective

and modern scholarship, delineating the disparity between Duan's work and contemporary scholarship.

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An Analysis of Duan Yucai's Theory of *Shengyi tongyuan*

in his *Annotations to the Shuowen jiezi*

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Research

For traditional Chinese intellectuals, both past and present, the significance of characters lies in their role as carriers of culture. The foundational study of Chinese culture commences with the study of its characters. The research of Qing philologist Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) was pivotal in establishing Chinese characters as the key to understanding ancient Chinese classics. Scholars since the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) have argued that without mastering the principles of Chinese character formation, one cannot truly understand the profound meaning contained in ancient texts. This viewpoint resonates with Xu Shen's 許慎 (58–147) statements in his preface to the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Simple Graphs and Analysing Compound Characters, hereafter *Shuowen*):

文字者，經藝之本，王政之始，前人所以垂後，後人所以識古。故曰：本立而道生，知天下之至赜，而不可亂也。¹

Written characters are the foundation of the classics, the beginning of royal government, the means by which former generations passed on [wisdom and experience] to posterity, and the channel through which later generations can learn from the past. Therefore, it is said: 'Once the root is established, the Dao will be born. We will know the world's deepest mysteries and not be confused.'

Unavoidably, a gap exists between the texts and their putative authors on the one hand, and later exegetes or commentators on the other. The gap caused by language changes and textual transmission results in exegetical problems. Nevertheless, it is the contention of this thesis that exegetical problems encountered in reading received versions of ancient texts, such as textual variants and especially phonetic borrowing, can be solved with philological aids and methods. Since sound often plays a crucial role in connecting textual variants, knowledge

¹ Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 [Annotations to the *Explaining Simple Graphs and Analysing Compound Characters*] (Taipei: Hongye wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 2013), p. 771.

of Old Chinese phonology is essential for deciphering the meanings represented by the textual variants.

Xu Shen, courtesy name Shuzhong 叔重, was an erudite classicist from the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220). He was regarded as ‘the peerless master of the Five Classics’ (*wujing wushuang* 五經無雙) by his contemporaries.² The *Shuowen*, compiled around 100 CE, has been hailed as Xu’s masterpiece by Chinese philologists past and present, and is considered to be the foundation stone of Chinese philology and exegesis. Huang Kan 黃侃 (1886–1935), a renowned philologist during the Republican period (1912–1949), declared that ‘the *Shuowen* is the most comprehensive book for studying the form, sound, and meaning of Chinese characters. One could not comprehend ancient Chinese without understanding the *Shuowen*.’³ French philologist Léon Wieger (1856–1933) remarked: ‘It remained the canon of the *zi* (characters), the authority consulted in all doubts, by Chinese philologists. All the dictionaries published for the last seventeen centuries boast of their having followed the *Shuowen*.’⁴ The *Shuowen*, serving as the only integrally extant dictionary from ancient China, differed greatly from earlier character primers such as *Cangjie pian* 倉頡篇 and *Jijiu pian* 急就篇.⁵ This monumental work stands as the world’s first full-fledged analytical dictionary, encompassing palaeography, lexicology, etymology, and the Six Principles of Character Formation (*liushu*

² *Hou han shu* 後漢書 [Record of the Late Han Dynasty], comp. by Sima Biao 司馬彪 (d.306), Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445) notes by Li Xian 李賢 (655–684), ed. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature), vol. 253 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2013), p. 541. The Five Classics consist of *Shijing* 詩經 (The Book of Poetry), *Shangshu* 尚書 (The Book of Documents), *Liji* 禮記 (The Book of Rites), *Yijing* 易經 (The Book of Changes), and *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals).

³ Chen Xinxiong 陳新雄 and Zeng Rongpan 曾榮汾, *Wenzixue* 文字學 [Philology] (Taipei: Wunan tushu chuban gongsi, 2010), p. 225.

⁴ Léon Wieger, *Chinese Characters: Their Origin, Etymology, History, Classification and Signification. A Thorough Study from Chinese Documents* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corporation, 1965), p. 8.

⁵ *Cangjie pian* 倉頡篇, authored by Li Si 李斯 (284–ca.208 BCE), and *Jijiu pian* 急就篇, authored by Shi You 史游 (fl.40 BCE), functioned as primers for instructing literacy to children in ancient China.

六書). The Six Principles of Character Formation are (1) *xiangxing* 象形 (pictograph), (2) *zhishi* 指事 (ideograph), (3) *huiyi* 會意 (associative compound), (4) *xingsheng* 形聲 (semantic-phonetic compound), (5) *zhuanzhu* 轉注 (mutually explanatory characters), and (6) *jiajie* 假借 (loan characters).⁶

The *Shuowen* contains nine thousand three hundred and fifty-three main characters, along with one thousand one hundred and sixty-three characters presented in alternate orthographies (*chongwen* 重文).⁷ All characters were systematically subsumed under a classification system of five hundred and forty section headings (*bushou* 部首). However, the form, sound, and meaning of some characters have changed since the *Shuowen* was compiled. Although the *Shuowen* serves as a tool to understand ancient texts, the tool itself requires explanation. Therefore, annotations to the *Shuowen* are indispensable for elucidating Xu Shen's words and the reasons that account for them.

Duan Yucai, one of the foremost philologists during the Qing dynasty, provided annotations to the *Shuowen* entitled the *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Annotations to the *Explaining Simple Graphs and Analysing Compound Characters*, hereafter *Duanzhu*). Duan possessed expertise in historical phonology. In addition to his contributions to Old Chinese phonology, his scholarly oeuvre included penetrating philological studies of two seminal component members of the original canonised Five Classics: *Shijing xiaoxue* 詩經小學 (Philological Studies in the *Book of Poetry*) and *Guwen Shangshu zhuanyi* 古文尚書撰異

⁶ (1) Pictographs depict actual objects being drawn from the shape of the objects, (2) Ideographs are used for abstract concepts with symbols used to depict them, (3) An associative compound combines two or more simple graphs to create a new character and enables the reader to understand the meaning by analysing its components, (4) Semantic-phonetic characters consist of semantic and phonetic elements of form and sound. The semantic element of form depicts the classifier. The phonetic element of sound denotes its sound. Semantic-phonetic character is also called phonetic compound, (5) Mutually explanatory characters are a pair of homonyms or near homonyms that can be used to explain each other, and (6) A loan character denotes a character with the same sound and is used to represent an expression for which a character has yet to be formulated.

⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 789.

(Variations in the Old-Text Version of the *Book of Documents*). However, beyond these important works that solidified Duan's reputation as a classicist, lies his magisterial magnum opus, the *Duanzhu*. The *Duanzhu* is viewed by most philological scholars as an authoritative text offering a comprehensive elucidation of the *Shuowen*. Duan not only expanded on Xu Shen's ideas but also clarified the rationale behind Xu Shen's notes and made modifications to some words in the *Shuowen*. In addition to elucidating Xu Shen's rationale for interpreting a character's original meaning, Duan further teased out the extended and borrowed meanings of characters by referring to philological materials. He also clarified the development of characters' forms, sounds, and meanings. Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717–1795), a contemporary of Duan, esteemed the *Duanzhu* so highly as to claim that it could not be surpassed by any other annotations on the *Shuowen*.⁸

Duan transcended previous philologists by combining the analysis of characters' sounds with those of their meanings. He clarified the semantic link between the phonetic element and the phonetic compound.⁹ Thus, he proposed that 'sound and meaning are from the same source' (*shengyi tongyuan* 聲義同源). Duan also put forward some principles regarding sound-meaning relations, such as 'the meaning of a character is invariably contained in its sound' (*Fan zi zhiyi, bi dezhu zi zhisheng* 凡字之義，必得諸字之聲)¹⁰ and 'characters that share a given phonetic element often share a given meaning' (*Fancong mousheng, duoyou mouyi* 凡從某聲，多有某義).¹¹ The practical value of Duan's theory lies in finding the semantic relationship between words, teasing out the derivative meanings of a character, and explaining characters by reference to the semantic function of phonetic elements. Duan's

⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 797.

⁹ Phonetic compound refers to semantic-phonetic character (*xingsheng zi* 形聲字) which consists of semantic and phonetic elements of form and sound. Phonetic element (*shengfu* 聲符) is used to denote the sound of a phonetic compound.

¹⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 717.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 31.

insights have exerted a tremendous influence on later studies of Chinese philology. Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1868–1936), an eminent Sinologist in early Republican China, commented as follows:

凡治小學，非專辨章形體，要於推尋故言，得其經脈；不明音韻，不知一字數義所由生，此段氏獨以為傑。¹²

The study of philology not only focuses on elucidating the outward form of characters but also has as its central concern the examination of the ancient language to understand its main branches. Without understanding the sound, one cannot know where the derivative meanings of a character originate from. Duan was especially excellent in this regard.

The *Duanzhu* represents Duan's achievements in historical phonology, lexicology, and exegesis. To demonstrate Duan's importance in his own time as well as his potential for research today, it is necessary to elucidate how he approached the *Shuowen* and how he brought out his revolutionary insights. How did Duan propose and implement the basic principles in his annotations to the *Shuowen*? What were his insights into the relationship between form, sound, and meaning? How did he gloss words by virtue of sound? How did he illustrate the extended and borrowed meanings of a character with reference to ancient texts? What were Duan's limitations? The answers to these questions are all implied between the lines of the *Duanzhu* and need to be explored.

Given the scope outlined above, the aim of this dissertation is to delve into Duan's engagement with the *Shuowen*, revolving around the principles of sound and meaning relations that he proposed and applied in the *Duanzhu*. Firstly, this thesis seeks to analyse his contributions by contextualising him within the Qing dynasty. To understand Duan's academic approach, his indebtedness to his mentor Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777) is clarified, and a comparison is drawn between Duan's views and those of his contemporary, Wang Niansun 王

¹² Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, *Guogu lunheng* 國故論衡 [Discussions on Chinese Culture] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), p. 9.

念孫 (1744–1832), regarding the application of ‘seeking meaning through sound’ (*yinsheng qiuyi* 因聲求義). Secondly, this thesis aims to provide a critical analysis of Duan’s theory of ‘sound and meaning spring from the same source’ by referencing his annotations to the *Shuowen*. It also aims to examine how Duan analysed characters based on Xu Shen’s explanation and how Duan implemented his principles in the *Duanzhu*. Concrete examples are provided in Chapter Five to illustrate Duan’s approach of ‘seeking meaning through sound’.

Furthermore, with the increasing accuracy of the reconstruction of Old Chinese sounds in modern times, particularly the clarity in reconstructing Old Chinese initials (*gusheng* 古聲) (of which Duan had only partial knowledge), Duan’s phonological achievements have become a milestone in the development of Chinese historical phonology. Additionally, considering that Duan did not have access to newly excavated ancient manuscripts, this study aims not only to showcase Duan’s revolutionary achievements but also to identify his limitations in light of contemporary scholarship. Readers will gain insight into both the strengths and weaknesses of Duan’s approach. This, in summary, is how the current project attempts to contribute to philological research.

1.2 Intellectual Context

Traditional Chinese philology reached its heyday during the Qing dynasty. Due to the academic and social context of the Qing scholars, their philological achievements surpassed those of their predecessors. Confucian philosophical thoughts in the late Ming dynasty leaned heavily towards those of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), both of whom emphasised moral cultivation over rigorous philological examination of texts. The speculative hermeneutics employed by late Ming scholars were deemed empty and futile

by Qing scholars, proving politically and socially detrimental.¹³ Scholars of the late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1911) concluded that the Ming regime lost its empire to barbarians (the Manchus) because its scholars failed to read the classics properly.¹⁴ Attributing the fall of the Ming dynasty partly to the influence of Neo-Confucianist philosophy, Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) advocated for a more objective and original approach to classical scholarship, which became known as the *Hanxue pai* 漢學派 (Han learning school) because of its admiration of Han dynasty scholars and their methods as opposed to the then orthodox Neo-Confucianist *Songxue pai* 宋學派 (Song learning school).¹⁵

Unlike Neo-Confucian thinkers who aimed to bridge the gap (i.e., the exegetical problems arising from the development and evolution of language) through circumventing previous scholarship and going directly back to antiquity through reasoning and reflection,¹⁶ Qing scholars built upon the work of Han scholars, emphasising philology and original ancient texts as windows into antiquity. Benjamin A. Elman remarked that Qing literati first sought out Tang (618–907) and then Han dynasty (221 BCE–220 CE) sources to overcome limitations found in Song and Ming dynasty commentaries. In particular, classical sources and commentaries from the Han dynasty were relatively unaffected by Daoist and Buddhist notions that had influenced Tang, Song, and Ming literati. Thus, Han dynasty literati increasingly received respect and attention from purists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁷

¹³ Lin Yin 林尹, *Zhongguo xueshu sixiang dagang* 中國學術思想大綱 [Outline of Chinese Scholarly Thought] (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2005), p. 143.

¹⁴ Sheldon Pollock, 'Introduction', *World Philology*, eds. Sheldon Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman, and Ku-ming Kevin Chang (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 15.

¹⁵ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), p. 155.

¹⁶ Ori Sela, *China's Philological Turn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), p. 93.

¹⁷ Benjamin A. Elman, 'The Crisis of Classical Philology in 18th-Century China', *World Philology*, eds. Sheldon Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman, and Ku-ming Kevin Chang, p. 231.

Rejecting the discursive speculations of Neo-Confucian discourse in the late Ming dynasty, Qing scholars shifted their focus from philosophy to philology. They strived to engage with ‘substantial learning’ (*puxue* 樸學).¹⁸ The methodological stance of Qing classical scholarship is ‘to establish the facts and to seek the truth’ (*shishi qiushi* 實事求是).¹⁹ Qing scholars sought truth through fundamental mastery of the language of ancient texts, interpreting concrete words on a philological basis to reconstruct the meanings of the ancient texts. Qing scholar Cheng Yaotian 程瑤田 (1725–1814) stated that ‘as for the difficulty in reading books, this difficulty rests in comprehending the characters. If one does not know the characters, one cannot penetrate their meaning’.²⁰ Thus, the *Shuowen* is an indispensable ancient dictionary in this respect because it clarifies the ancient forms, sounds, and meanings of Chinese characters with reference to ancient texts. Not only did Xu Shen provide the orthography of the archaic form for each character, but he also specified the phonetic element for the vast majority of characters, over eighty percent, that were formed as phonetic compounds.²¹

Therefore, Qing philologists regarded the *Shuowen* as an essential point of reference and ‘a bridge of classical studies’ (*jingxue zhi jinliang* 經學之津梁),²² considering it an authoritative dictionary of philology since its compilation in the Eastern Han dynasty.

However, the *Shuowen* is not without problems and mistakes, which in many cases were

¹⁸ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 28. Neo-Confucianism refers to the schools of Confucianism that developed in the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. Substantial learning refers to evidential investigation of classical texts through the application of philological expertise.

¹⁹ David B. Honey, *A History of Chinese Classical Scholarship*, vol. II (Washington: Academica Press, 2021), p. 2.

²⁰ Cheng Jisheng 程際盛 (fl.1780), *Shuowen yinjing kao* 說文引經考 [Examination of Citations from the *Shuowen*], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Continuation of the Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature), vol. 212 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2002), p. 13. The original Chinese text is: ‘夫讀書之難，難在識字。弗知其字，弗通其義也。’ Translation quoted from: Ori Sela, *China’s Philological Turn*, p. 89.

²¹ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, p. 212.

²² Cheng Jisheng, *Shuowen yinjing kao*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 212, p. 11.

caused by the uncertainties of textual transmission; thus, a significant part of the philologists' work consisted of checking and correcting it.²³ Alongside using the *Shuowen* for interpreting ancient texts, Qing scholars focused on philological studies of the *Shuowen* itself, signalling a rediscovery of the *Shuowen* during the Qing dynasty.

In addition, during the reigns of Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (1661–1722) and Yongzheng 雍正 (1723–1736), the period known as the 'literary inquisition' (*wenzi yu* 文字獄) saw widespread restrictions on literary activities as the Manchu rulers aimed to consolidate political power and suppress opposition.²⁴ Any words deemed politically sensitive or offensive by the imperial court could result in imprisonment or even the death penalty. Despite the harsh political policies, this period, which lasted for around one hundred and forty years, fostered the development of philology. Since Chinese scholars were now at the mercy of the ideological control of the Manchu rulers, freedom of thought and speech were severely restricted. Qing scholars had to divert their attentions from political issues and philosophical ideas to the relatively objective and neutral subject of philological studies in order to avoid literary taboos.²⁵ This was one of the factors that led to the heyday of philological development in Qing China.

During the Qing dynasty, there were many outstanding scholars such as Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, and Wang Niansun. They developed and applied the method of 'seeking meaning through sound' to solve exegetical problems in their works, such as *Fangyan shuzheng* 方言疏證 (Evidential Commentaries on *Dialects*) by Dai Zhen, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注

²³ Ori Sela, *China's Philological Turn*, p. 111.

²⁴ The imperial government's large-scale intervention in academics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aimed to depoliticise Chinese literati and mobilise them in support of the state. Chinese scholars living under Manchu rule were exposed, however, to a selective form of literary censorship. Scholars could say and write what they pleased about the Classics, but if one word was discovered that described the Manchu court disrespectfully, they were pounced upon with a vengeance. See Benjamin A. Elman's *From Philosophy to Philology*, p. 15.

²⁵ Lin Yin, *Zhongguo xueshu sixiang dagang*, p. 144.

(Annotations to the *Explaining Simple Graphs and Analysing Compound Characters*) by Duan Yucai, *Guangya shuzheng* 廣雅疏證 (Exegetical Evidence for *Expanding Standard*) by Wang Niansun, and so forth. Many Qing scholars dedicated themselves to expounding ancient texts, examining the forms, sounds, and meanings of characters from a philological perspective. There is no doubt that the ancient textual meaning is neither fixed nor constant. As John Makeham asserts: ‘Like history itself, the fullness of the meaning of a text is only to be “realised in the changing process of understanding”. However, in relation to the study of early Chinese texts, linguistics bear on the determination of meaning: especially in terms of palaeography, phonology, and lexicology.’²⁶ Chinese philology is like a scientific tool which gives great attention to the precise interpretation of an individual word through reference to its form, sound, and meaning. As sentences are comprised of words, an inaccurate explanation of a single word can lead to misunderstanding of the sentence as a whole and even the text in its entirety. Therefore, Qing scholars emphasised that when interpreting ancient texts, what is indispensable is evidential analysis through philological expertise rather than the speculative hermeneutics that characterised Neo-Confucianism in the late Ming dynasty.

Scholars in the late Ming dynasty, such as Chen Di 陳第 (1541–1617) and Gu Yanwu, understood that in order to comprehend the meanings of words in ancient Chinese, one must turn to Old Chinese phonology. In pre-Han texts, phonetic borrowing poses a challenging obstacle that may lead to misinterpretations.²⁷ In ancient times, when the graphic forms of characters were not yet fixed, language (i.e., sound) held primary significance, while the

²⁶John Makeham, ‘A New Hermeneutical Approach to Early Chinese Texts: The Case of the Analects’, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 33, (2006): 96–97.

²⁷ Here, phonetic borrowing refers to the case in which a character (i.e., phonetic loan character) does not represent its own meaning but instead stands for the meaning of another homonym. See the examples in Chapter 5.4.

writing system (i.e., form) played a secondary role.²⁸ The variability in character forms was prevalent during the Warring States period but rapidly diminished by the time of the Western Han dynasty. This trend was influenced, in part, by the Qin Emperor's unification of China, which involved standardising not only characters but also measurements and weights. The diverse character forms gradually faded away, leaving behind remnants that appear to be phonetic loan characters.²⁹ Given that phonetic borrowing relies on sound identification, proficiency in Old Chinese phonology is indispensable for scholars striving to accurately interpret ancient texts.

Consequently, Gu Yanwu paved the way for later Qing philologists to interpret the classics through the lens of historical phonology. He stated, '[When] reading the Nine Classics, one should commence with the study of Chinese characters. [When] studying Chinese characters, one should commence with understanding Old Chinese phonology'³⁰ (*Du jiu jing zi kaowen shi, kaowen zi zhiyin shi* 讀九經自考文始, 考文自知音始).³¹ By the 17th-Century, it was widely acknowledged that the phonetic element of a character was the decisive element in establishing meaning.³² Consequently, more and more scholars recognised the significance of historical phonology and switched their focus from a character's form to its sound. Philologists such as Dai Zhen, Duan Yucui, Wang Niansun, and Jiang Yougao 江有

²⁸ Chu Chia-ning 竺家寧, *Xunguxue zhiliu* 訓詁學之旅 [An Exploration of Exegesis] (Taipei: Xinxuelin chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 2019), p. 34.

²⁹ Haeree Park, 'Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts', *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63. 4 (2009): 881.

³⁰ Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, *Tinglin wenji* 亭林文集 [Collected Poems and Essays of Gu Tinglin] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 73.

³¹ The Nine Classics consist of *Shijing* 詩經 (The Book of Poetry), *Shangshu* 尚書 (The Book of Documents), *Liji* 禮記 (The Book of Rites), *Zhouli* 周禮 (Zhou Rites), *Yili* 儀禮 (Ceremonials and Rituals), *Yijing* 易經 (The Book of Changes), *Chunqiu zuozhuan* 春秋左傳 (Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals), *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳 (Gongyang Commentary), and *Guliangzhuan* 穀梁傳 (Guliang Commentary).

³² Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, p. 217.

誥 (1773–1851) concentrated on reconstructing ancient rhyme groups (*yunbu* 韻部)³³ and made substantial progress in the study of Old Chinese phonology. Dai, Duan, Wang, and Jiang epitomise the *Qian-Jia School* 乾嘉學派,³⁴ prioritising pure philological research and concentrating on classical texts.

Duan stands out among those who made significant contributions to Old Chinese phonology, particularly in categorising ancient rhymes. His innovative ideas are documented in his work ‘*Liushu yinyun biao* 六書音韻表’ (The Rhyme Diagram of the Six Principles of Character Formation), appended to the end of the *Duanzhu*, which has greatly inspired later scholars. In addition to his remarkable annotations to the *Shuowen*, Duan’s contributions that set him apart from other Qing philologists can be briefly summarised as follows:

Firstly, stepping further than his predecessors like Gu Yanwu and Jiang Yong 江永 (1681–1762), Duan divided ancient rhymes into seventeen groups, refining the division further. He discovered phonetic compounds as essential elements for reconstructing Old Chinese and proposed that characters with the same phonetic element belong to the same ancient rhyme group.

Secondly, Duan provided significant insights into sound-meaning relations. He observed that phonetic elements often contributed to the meanings of phonetic compounds. Moreover, characters with similar pronunciations are often semantically related. Hence, he proposed that

³³ The characters that could rhyme together in the *Book of Poetry* were placed together in rhyme groups (*yunbu* 韻部); all the characters which belonged to the same rhyme group could potentially rhyme together.

³⁴ In comparison with Neo-Confucianism in the late Ming dynasty, the *Qian-Jia School* (*Qian-Jia xuepai* 乾嘉學派), also called the School of Han Studies (*Hanxue pai* 漢學派) is a philosophical tradition that interpreted the Confucian texts mainly with the aid of philological methods and relied mainly on the Han commentaries. The school was given the name *Qian-Jia School* because it flourished during the Qianlong 乾隆 (1736–1795) and Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796–1820) reigns of the Qing period 清 (1644–1911). Representatives of this school include scholars such as Hui Dong 惠棟 (1697–1758), Dai Zhen 戴震, Duan Yucai 段玉裁, and Wang Niansun 王念孫. See Liang Qichao’s 梁啟超 (1873–1929) *Qingdai xueshu gailun* 清代學術概論 [Intellectual Trends in the Qing Period] (Beijing: Renmin University of China Press, 2004), pp. 111–112.

‘sound and meaning spring from the same source’ along with the following implications of this finding:

(1) 凡字之義，必得諸字之聲。³⁵

A character’s meaning is invariably contained in its sound.

(2) 凡同聲，多同義。³⁶

Homonyms often share similar meanings.

(3) 凡从某聲，多有某義。³⁷

Characters that share a given phonetic element often share a given meaning.

(4) 形聲多兼會意。³⁸

The majority of the phonetic compounds are also associative compounds.

These principles can be applied to many aspects of exegesis. Some of Duan’s assertions, however, appear to be somewhat arbitrary, prompting the need for a critical examination of his statements. For instance, Duan overstated his case that the word ‘*jie* 皆’ (all) can be used in the principle of ‘characters that share a given phonetic element *all* share a given meaning’.³⁹ While the principle generally applies to many phonetic elements, exceptions exist. It is noteworthy that the meaning conveyed by the phonetic element may sometimes diverge in various ways. In other words, a phonetic element may encompass different meanings in different phonetic compounds.

Thirdly, Duan exerted a significant influence on exegesis and solved many problems encountered in words in ancient texts, owing to his expertise in phonology. In the preface of his ‘The Rhyme Diagram of the Six Principles of Character Formation’, Duan proposed that ‘phonology is made clear and so the Six Principles of Character Formation is made clear. Six Principles of Character Formation is made clear and so the ancient classics and commentaries cannot but be made clear’ (*Yinyun ming er liushu ming, liushu ming er gu jingzhuan wubu*

³⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 717.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 101.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 382.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 52.

³⁹ Further details, see in Chapter 4.5.

ketong 音韻明而六書明，六書明而古經傳無不可通).⁴⁰ This insight stemmed from his experience in classical studies and philological research.

1.3 Key Terms and Concepts

1.3.1 The Stages of the Evolution of Chinese Historical Phonology

The evolution of Chinese historical phonology can be roughly divided into four periods: Old Chinese, Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Old Mandarin. Old Chinese refers to the Chinese language during the early and mid-Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE). It is the language of the early Chinese classics and of Zhou bronze inscriptions. Early Middle Chinese refers to the language codified in the rhyming dictionary *Qieyun* 切韻 (Segmenting Rhymes) of 601 CE. Late Middle Chinese refers to the language of late Tang and early Song. Old Mandarin refers to the early form of Mandarin preserved in such works as the *Zhongyuan yinyun* 中原音韻 (Rhymes of the Central Plain),⁴¹ a rhyme dictionary of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), aimed at establishing a standard for rhymes in Yuan opera.⁴²

1.3.2 *Fanqie* Spelling 反切

Fanqie 反切 (Sinographic Spelling) was invented in the Han dynasty and was prevalent in Middle Chinese. It is a traditional way of indicating the pronunciation of a Chinese character by using two other Chinese characters. It uses two characters to phonetically represent the pronunciation of a third character, with the first character indicating the initial sound and the second character representing the rhyme. In other words, the syllable representing the unknown character is broken down into two parts. For example, the *fanqie* spelling of the

⁴⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 813.

⁴¹ Authored by Zhou Deqing 周德清 (1277–1365).

⁴² William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p. 14.

character *dong* 東 /tung/ is *dehong* 德紅. *Dong* 東 /tung/ and *de* 德 /tək/ belong to the same initial *duan* 端 /t-/; while *dong* 東 /tung/ and *hong* 紅 /yung/ belong to the same rhyme group of 東 /-ung/. This means that the character 東 /tung/ has the same initial as 德 /tək/ and the same rhyme as 紅 /yung/: tung = t(ə)k + (y)ung.

1.3.3 Alliterative Syllables (*shuangsheng* 雙聲)

If the first characters in the *fanqie* spellings of two characters belong to the same initial category, these two characters are considered alliterative syllables. In other words, the initial consonants of the two alliterating characters are the same. For example, the *fanqie* spelling of the character ‘*tong* 同’/dung/ is ‘*tuhong* 徒紅’. The *fanqie* spelling of the character ‘*ti* 提’/diei/ is ‘*duxu* 杜兮’. Since both ‘*tu* 徒’/duo/ and ‘*du* 杜’/duo/ belong to the same initial *ding* 定 /d-/, the characters ‘*tong* 同’/dung/ and ‘*ti* 提’/diei/ are regarded as alliterative syllables.

If the initials of two characters are different but they share the same articulation place (i.e., lip, tongue, back-tooth, front-tooth, throat), these two characters are considered approximately alliterative syllables. For example, the *fanqie* spelling of character *de* 德 /tək/ is *duoze* 多則 with *duo* 多 /tâ/ belonging to the initial category *duan* 端 /t-/. The *fanqie* spelling of the character *tong* 同 /dung/ is *tuhong* 徒紅 with *tu* 徒 /duo/ belonging to the initial category *ding* 定 /d-/. Though *duan* 端 /t-/ is voiceless, while *ding* 定 /d-/ is voiced, they are both tongue-head initials with the same articulation place. Therefore, characters *de* 德 /tək/ and *tong* 同 /dung/ are approximately alliterative syllables.

1.3.4 Rhymed Syllables (*dieyun* 疊韻)

If the second characters of the *fanqie* spellings of two characters belong to the same rhyme group, these two characters are regarded as rhymed syllables. For example, the *fanqie* spelling

of the character *tong* 同 /dung/ is *tuhong* 徒紅. The *fanqie* spelling of the character *hong* 洪 /yung/ is *hugong* 戶公. As both *hong* 紅 /yung/ and *gong* 公 /kung/ belong to the same rhyme group of *dong* 東 /-ung/, *tong* 同 /dung/ and *hong* 洪 /yung/ are thought to be rhymed syllables.

Traditionally, the rhymes are arranged into three categories: *yinsheng* 陰聲 (vocalic-final), those with no coda or a vocalic coda; *rusheng* 入聲, those with voiceless stop codas /-k/, /-t/, or /-p/; and *yangsheng* 陽聲 (nasal final), those with nasal codas.⁴³

1.3.5 Phonetic Radical (*zigen* 字根)

The phonetic radical refers to the original phonetic element (*shengfu* 聲符) of a phonetic compound (*xingsheng zi* 形聲字).⁴⁴ It can also refer to the phonetic element which is used to denote the pronunciation of the phonetic compound. Phonetic compounds sharing the same phonetic radical form a *xiesheng* series. Such *xiesheng* series shared the same or similar pronunciation when they were created.

For instance, the character *pang* 旁 serves as the phonetic element of the phonetic compound *bang* 謗. The character *fang* 方 serves as the phonetic element of the phonetic compound *pang* 旁. Hence 方 is the phonetic radical of 謗. Namely, 方, 旁 and 謗 belong to the same *xiesheng* series.

1.3.6 Exegesis (*xunguxue* 訓詁學)

Exegesis is a branch of Chinese philology dedicated to the study of classical Chinese semantics. It serves as a bridge between ancient languages of various epochs and different

⁴³ William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 22.

⁴⁴ Phonetic compound is also called semantic-phonetic compound.

dialects. This applied discipline focuses on explaining words in ancient Chinese, with word glosses as its central topic. It addresses issues such as cognate words, sound gloss, etymology, and other related topics.

1.3.7 *Shengxun* 聲訓 (Sound Gloss) and Paronomastic Gloss

Sound gloss refers to a method of elucidating the meaning of a word by using phonetically similar characters or words. It involves providing a gloss for a term by employing homonyms or near homonyms that convey a similar meaning to the original word. This technique aids in understanding the semantic nuances and origins of words and reflects the intention of seeking the source of the meaning of a word.

The term paronomasia, a ‘pun’ or ‘play on words’, has been defined in traditional European linguistic discourse as ‘a slight change of a verb or a noun when the alternation of a letter or a syllable changes the meaning’ and plays an important role in the history of the study of etymology.⁴⁵ Paronomastic gloss in this thesis means the use of any logograph with an established lexical association to write a second unrelated but homophonous, or nearly homophonous, word; also called rebus usage (noun: paronomasia).⁴⁶ It was primarily employed by Han scholars who incorporated their philosophical concepts into word glosses.

1.3.8 The *Youwen* Theory 右文說

Song scholars discovered that the phonetic element, which is often on the right-hand side of a phonetic compound, contributes to the compound’s meaning to a great extent. The *youwen* theory refers to the explanation through reference to the right-hand side of the phonetic

⁴⁵ Timothy Michael O’Neill’s *Ideography and Chinese Language Theory* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), p. 144.

⁴⁶ William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994), p. 181.

compound.

1.3.9 *Yinsheng qiuyi* 因聲求義 (Seek Meaning through Sound)

‘Seek meaning through sound’ refers to a method in Chinese philology where the meaning of a character or word is deduced or explained based on its pronunciation or phonetic similarity to other characters or words with related meanings. This approach is based on the fact that ‘sound and meaning are from the same source’. The approach of *yinsheng qiuyi* is commonly used to explore meaning, trace etymology, and discern phonetic borrowing through the analysis of phonetic indicators.

1.4 Literature Review

In the subsequent section, I aim to provide a brief introduction to previous Chinese and Western scholarship on Chinese linguistics, with a specific focus on sound-meaning relations.

1.4.1 Research on Related Field by Western Philologists

Western Sinologists have conducted pioneering research in Chinese linguistics, dedicating over a century to studying Chinese historical phonology, etymology, and palaeography. Below is a list of statements made by Western Sinologists, representing their views on sound-meaning relations and the works of notable Western philologists in related fields.

Willem Pieter Groeneveldt (1841–1915) offered insightful analysis of phonetic compounds by highlighting a common mistake frequently made by philologists of relying solely upon the graphic form and neglecting the sound when the original meaning of a character is explored. He stressed the significance of a character’s sound in the following remark:

In the first place, Sinologues have too often considered Chinese characters as symbols

only speaking to the eye and in which the sound was of secondary or no importance. This now is completely wrong. We must not forget for a moment that, when a character was formed to represent an idea, this idea had already previously been expressed by a certain sound or word...⁴⁷

Groeveneldt referred to the concept of ‘root’ in Western etymology, signifying the etymological origin of cognate words, which serves as the root of word derivation. He argued against the notion that phonetic compounds consist of a classifier for meaning and a phonetic for sound. According to Groeneveldt, the phonetic element of a phonetic compound should be labelled as ‘primitive’, as it essentially describes the original meaning of the compound, while the classifier indicates the class of ideas to which it belongs.⁴⁸ Phonetic compounds with the same ‘primitive’ appear to have been derived from the same root. However, this root may also have been represented by other ‘primitives’ with the same pronunciation, as different ‘primitives’ were sometimes used interchangeably when their pronunciation became identical.⁴⁹

The French Sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) also acknowledged that the phonetic elements of phonetic compounds impinge on meaning in addition to representing pronunciation. Pelliot suggested that the term ‘semantic-phonetic compound’ covered two categories. In the first category, the phonetic element contributes solely to the word’s sound but has nothing to do with its meaning. Another type of phonetic compound, according to traditional Chinese writing analysis, is considered a semantic-phonetic compound, where the phonetic element contributes to the basic meaning of a word while the classifier only limits its definition.⁵⁰ Pelliot acknowledged that the phonetic element can serve as a semantic carrier;

⁴⁷ W.P. Groeveneldt, ‘Dr. Williams’ Dictionary’, *The China Review, or notes & queries on the Far East*, vol. 3 (Hong Kong: China Mail Office), 1875: 235.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 239.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 241. For example, *lu* 淥 (seep through, filter) with the primitive *lu* 𩇛 /*luk/ is the variant of *lu* 漉 (seep through, filter) with the primitive *lu* 鹿 /*luk/.

⁵⁰ Paul Pelliot, ‘Brèves Remarques sur le Phonétisme dans L’écriture Chinoise’, *T’oung Pao*, vol. 32, Livr. 2/3 (1936): 163.

however, he failed to explicitly explain the reasons that account for this phenomenon.

Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) profoundly influenced Chinese philology by applying Western historical linguistics to Chinese. Karlgren excelled in historical phonology and exegesis, producing glosses on ancient texts such as the *Book of Poetry* and the *Book of Documents*. His *Grammata Serica Recensa* is a dictionary for etymological study which is organised according to word families. Karlgren divided these families of words into thirty-eight rhyme groups with each group sub-divided. Characters with the same phonetic element are gathered, and each character is marked with archaic (early first millennium BCE), ancient (around the 6th-Century), and modern Mandarin pronunciations. The phonetic element of each group of phonetic compounds is attached to the oracle bone inscription and the bronze inscription. Such arrangement not only highlights the character's meaning through ancient scripts, but also clarifies its extended meanings. It is an improvement on his earlier work 'Word Families in Chinese', which lacked ancient literature as supporting evidence.

Peter A. Boodberg (1903–1972) emphasised the function of a character's pronunciation. He noted that a greater number of homonyms, especially during the early stages of linguistic development, must be regarded as etymologically related to each other.⁵¹ Boodberg argued that the fundamental problem in Chinese epigraphy lies in the relationship between a graph and vocable. Therefore, he remarked in this respect that most scholars concentrate their efforts on 'graphic semantics', and the study of the sound of a word has been almost completely neglected in favour of the graphic integument, i.e., the form of a character, that encases it.⁵² Boodberg contended that many early Chinese graphs are polyphonous, and people often did not realise that the phonetic elements are present in these compounds and mistaken them as

⁵¹ Peter A. Boodberg, 'Some Proleptical Remarks on the Evolution of Archaic Chinese', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* vol. 2, 3/4 (1937): 336.

⁵² *Ibid*, 329.

associative compounds. Accordingly, most of the associative compounds in the *Duanzhu* should be re-classified as semantic-phonetic compounds. At least one component of a compound character must indicate its pronunciation. Therefore, Boodberg boldly asserted that semantograms (i.e., associative compounds) do not exist except in a few cases.⁵³

William G. Boltz fully embraces the viewpoint of his tutor, Boodberg, asserting that Chinese writing does not have associative compound; any character composed of multiple components must have at least one component indicating its pronunciation. He stresses that ‘there is no way a character can be invented by putting together constituent elements none of which is intended to have any phonetic function.’⁵⁴ Boodberg and Boltz’s assertion appears somewhat biased and arbitrary as it overlooks the fact that associative compounds also contribute to the principles of Chinese character formation. *Huiyi* characters form a fairly large category; the process, although not nearly as productive as the *xingsheng* process, has continued to be employed in the formation of new characters throughout Chinese history and is still used today. Li Xiaoding 李孝定 (1918–1997) claims that the proportion of *huiyi* characters in the oracle bone inscriptions was one in three, playing a more significant role than it did later.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is essential not to disregard the *huiyi* principle.

Some scholars challenge Boltz’s claim, holding different views. An expression of this rejection has been presented by Françoise Bottéro, who has written the most spirited responses to Boltz. One of her principal arguments is that Chinese encompasses many compound characters, attested from an early period, in which neither element appears to be

⁵³ Peter A. Boodberg, ‘Some Proleptical Remarks on the Evolution of Archaic Chinese’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* vol. 2, 3/4 (1937): 345–346.

⁵⁴ William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 72.

⁵⁵ Li Xiaoding 李孝定 (1918–1997), *Zhongguo wenzi de yuanshi yu yanbian* 中國文字的原始與演變 [The Origin and Evolution of Chinese Characters] (Guangzhou: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1971).

phonetic.⁵⁶ Geoffrey Sampson argues that Chinese script did make heavy use of a phonetic principle in creating written forms for words, but alternative principles were also at work: *huiyi* characters were devised independently of phonetic characters. Boltz's rejection of the *huiyi* category has very little to do with empirical research. It is mainly based on aprioristic assumptions about what 'must' necessarily be the case, which are not convincing.⁵⁷ Zev Handel emphasises that meaning based graphic compounds (i.e., *huiyi* characters) are well motivated and meaningful to script users, and therefore could have played a role (even if limited) in the formation of the Chinese script.⁵⁸ Imre Galambos stresses that while modern research may be justified in doubting the impact of the *huiyi* principle at the early stages of the writing system, one cannot fail to notice the presence of numerous *huiyi*-type forms in medieval manuscripts and epigraphic.⁵⁹

In his article 'On Early Chinese Morphology and its Intellectual History', David Prager Branner addresses aspects of morphology (systematic changes of sound in accordance with changes in meaning and function) in early Chinese with its intellectual history and practical application.⁶⁰ He draws attention to Yang Quan's 楊泉 (fl.280) *Wuli lun* 物理論 (Discussions on the Laws of Things), which says, 'in metal and stone it is called "jian 鑿 (firm)"; in plants and trees it is called "jin 緊 (tough)"; in people, it is called "xian 賢 (sage)".'⁶¹ He further

⁵⁶ Françoise Bottéro, 'Review of Boltz, The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116.3 (1996): 574–77; Françoise Bottéro, 'Writing on Shell and Bone in Shang China', *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process*, ed. Stephen D. Houston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 252–54.

⁵⁷ Geoffrey Sampson and Chen Zhiquan, 'The Reality of Compound Ideographs', *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* vol. 41. 2 (2013): 255–259.

⁵⁸ Zev Handel, 'Does Xu Shen's Huiyi Category Reflect Historical Reality? An Argument for the Existence of Compound Graphs Lacking Phonophorics', *New Horizons in the Study of Chinese: Dialectology, Grammar, and Philology* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2016), pp. 582–583.

⁵⁹ Imre Galambos, 'Popular Character Forms (*Suzi*) and Semantic Compound (*Huiyi*) Characters in Medieval Chinese Manuscripts', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* vol. 131. 3 (2011): 395.

⁶⁰ David Prager Branner, 'On Early Chinese Morphology and its Intellectual History', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* vol. 13, 1 (2003): 45.

⁶¹ Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 [Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era], ed. *Siku*

proposes that phonetic compounds containing the same phonetic element are to be regarded as semantically cognate.⁶² In his ‘Article on “Chinese Writing”’, Branner clarifies that the term *bushou* 部首, generally labelled as ‘radical’ by Western philologists, is better translated as ‘classifier’. ‘Radical’ suggests that the determinative element is somehow the etymological ‘root’ of the graph when, in fact, most semantic determinatives are late additions in compound characters. It is the original polysemous phonetic element that deserves the designation ‘root’.⁶³

Regarding the development of Chinese historical phonology in the Qing dynasty, Benjamin A. Elman seeks to explain why so many Qing scholars focused their research on phonology. In his *From Philosophy to Philology*, Elman notes that phonetic borrowing was closely related to the restoration of ancient Chinese. ‘A system of analysis known as “characters formed through phonetic borrowings” was employed not only to reconstruct ancient phonology but, more importantly, to decipher the ancient meaning of characters by means of ancient phonology.’⁶⁴ He also mentions the *youwen* theory,⁶⁵ noting that Qing scholars gradually developed a more sophisticated notion of how phonetic elements operated in the formation of complex characters. In other words, phonetic elements were not only supposed to supply the sound of a character, but also provide an indicator with regard to its meaning. This is also one of the reasons why Qing philological studies place so much emphasis on phonology and regard it as a systematic vehicle to ‘restore the past’.⁶⁶

quanshu, vol. 896, p. 633.

⁶² David Prager Branner, ‘On Early Chinese Morphology and its Intellectual History’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* vol. 13, 1 (2003): 63.

⁶³ David Prager Branner, ‘Article on “Chinese Writing”’, *International Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd edition, ed. E. K. Brown, Amsterdam and London: Elsevier vol. 2 (2006): 341.

⁶⁴ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, p. 217.

⁶⁵ The *youwen* theory proposes that the meaning of a phonetic compound is primarily contained in its right-hand side graphic element, i.e., the phonetic element.

⁶⁶ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, p. 218.

While previous Sinologists commonly relied on Karlgren's *Grammata serica recensa* for Ancient Chinese reconstructions, Karlgren's work has appeared outdated in recent times. For instance, E.G. Pulleybank (1922–2013) devotes considerable effort to the phonetic reconstruction of Old Chinese sounds. His work *Middle Chinese: A Study in Historical Phonology* reconstructs the sound system of the *Qieyun* rhyme dictionary and elucidates its relation to the standard languages of later periods down to the present.⁶⁷ Pulleybank provides a comprehensive re-evaluation of Middle Chinese, striving to approximate the actual pronunciation of the language at specific periods in the past. In the preface to his *Middle Chinese*, he notes that another important aid to future progress will surely be the analysis of Old Chinese morphology. It has been realised that there are many words of similar sounds and similar meanings that must be somehow related to each other.⁶⁸

Axel Schuessler, in his *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, presents more extensive materials than Karlgren's *Grammata Serica Recensa*. Schuessler's work takes full advantage of the discoveries of etymology in recent years and offers a highly accessible presentation of phonological detail. This etymological dictionary aims to provide information on the origin of Old Chinese words, including possible word family relationships within Chinese and outside contacts, focusing on the actual words of Old Chinese rather than their graphic representations.⁶⁹

In his *A Handbook of Eastern Han Sound Glosses*, W. South Coblin offers a brief review of previous works on Eastern Han phonology. He collects and presents a large amount of transcriptional data of sound glosses, including loan-graph glosses, direct sound glosses, and

⁶⁷ E.G. Pulleybank, *Middle Chinese: A Study in Historical Phonology* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), p. 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. xviii.

⁶⁹ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. xi.

paronomastic glosses from the Eastern Han dynasty.⁷⁰ Coblin focuses on data analysis and posits the reconstruction of ancient pronunciation in the Eastern Han dynasty, demonstrating a convincing command of primary Han documents and making them relevant to those working in the field.⁷¹

William H. Baxter's *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* serves as a comprehensive guide to the study of Old Chinese. It not only addresses Old Chinese itself but also provides a succinct and easy-to-understand description of Middle Chinese phonology and a short history of Old Chinese.⁷² Baxter-Sagart's *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* is a product of several years' collaboration between William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart to produce an improved linguistic reconstruction of the phonology, morphology, and lexicon of Old Chinese. In addition to relying on the evidence used in traditional reconstructions, they employ a broader approach, including evidence from modern dialects, especially those dialects that are likely to be most informative about Old Chinese, research on languages of the Kra-Dai, Hmong-Mien, Tibeto-Burman, and Vietic families that preserve early loanwords from Chinese, as well as archaeological discoveries in China.⁷³

As Baxter and Sagart's work illustrates, modern research on the historical phonology of Old Chinese has also devoted much effort to historical comparison and reconstruction. For example, Wolfgang Behr's 'Morphological Notes on the Old Chinese Counterfactual' provides an in-depth study of an important construction, presented from a cross-linguistic perspective. It effectively demonstrates the potential of reconstructions of Old Chinese

⁷⁰ Paronomastic gloss refers to the use of any logograph with an established lexical association to write a second unrelated but homophonous, or nearly homophonous, word.

⁷¹ Paul B. Denlinger, 'Reviewed Work: A Handbook of Eastern Han Sound Glosses by W. South Coblin', *T'oung Pao* vol. 72, 4/5 (1986): 316.

⁷² Jerry Norman, 'Reviewed Work: A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology by William H. Baxter', *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 52, 3 (1993): 704–705.

⁷³ William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, pp. 1–4.

morphology for advanced multifaceted linguistics of this language.⁷⁴ Nathan W. Hill's *The Historical Phonology of Tibetan, Burmese, and Chinese* synthesises a wide range of research on the sound changes stretching back from Tibetan, Burmese, and Chinese to a common ancestor. These three languages have the oldest and best-attested textual histories of the family and have therefore served as the foundation for most efforts of historical comparison and reconstruction.⁷⁵

In addition, many eminent works on the Chinese language offer an overview of the nature and development of the Chinese writing system and newly excavated manuscripts. For example, Jerry Norman's (1936–2012) *Chinese* provides a general introduction to the Chinese language, tracing its history from the beginnings in the second millennium BCE. and describing its contemporary forms, both standard and dialectal, from the standpoints of structure, diachronic development, and sociolinguistic status.⁷⁶ William G. Boltz's *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System* addresses the two major transformations of the Chinese written language. In the first, Boltz outlines the processes and means by which Chinese logographs were formed, a development well underway by 1200 BCE. The second part discusses more briefly the standardisation of script a millennium later during the Qin (221–ca.207 BCE) and Han (221 BCE–220 CE) periods.⁷⁷

In his *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, Edward L. Shaughnessy discusses some cases of homophonic substitution in ancient texts. His *Sources of Western Zhou History* provides a comprehensive introduction to the inscribed bronzes of the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–

⁷⁴ Lukáš Zádřapa, 'The Ancient Chinese Language', *Oxford Bibliographies in Chinese Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 19.

⁷⁵ Zev Handel, 'Reviews of the Historical Phonology of Tibetan, Burmese, and Chinese by Nathan W. Hill', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* vol. 141, 2 (2021): 459.

⁷⁶ W. South Coblin, 'Review of Chinese by Jerry Norman', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* vol. 110, 1 (1990): 111.

⁷⁷ Kidder Smith, 'Review of the Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System by William G. Boltz', *Bowdoin College in Religious Studies Review* vol. 21, 4 (1995).

ca.771BCE) and demonstrates the value of the inscriptions as historical documents. His *Unearthing the Changes* illustrates how archaeological discoveries may help us understand the original ancient text. Galambos' *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts* sheds light on the development of the Chinese script and offers useful approaches to the study of Warring States manuscripts and variant character forms. Haeree Park's 'Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts' is mainly concerned with structural variants of characters and the phonological basis underlying the usage of loan characters. The issue is addressed by what this variation reveals about Old Chinese phonology and especially dialectal variation.⁷⁸

1.4.2 Research on Related Field by Chinese Philologists

Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1868–1936) was a specialist in the field of philology in the early years of the Republican China. Building upon the achievements of Qing scholars, he emphasised that sound provides the etymological source of a character's meaning. In his work *Wenshi* 文始 (The Source of Scripts), Zhang reaffirmed the phonetic nature of the Chinese script and sought etymological connections through the phonetic elements of Chinese characters.⁷⁹ However, some phonetic compounds possess meanings that do not align with their phonetic elements. Zhang suggested that such discrepancy stems from the fact that the meaning of these *xiesheng* series is derived from another character sharing the same sound as the phonetic compounds.⁸⁰ Thus, the meaning carried by the phonetic element should not be judged by its graphic form but rather by its sound.⁸¹ Zhang argued that sound is a crucial element that

⁷⁸ Lukáš Zádrapa, 'The Ancient Chinese Language', *Oxford Bibliographies in Chinese Studies*, p. 52.

⁷⁹ Laurent Sagart, 'Word Families', *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, eds. Rint Sybesma, Wolfgang Behr, Yueguo Gu, Zev Handel, C.-T. James Huang, James Myers (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 4, p. 577.

⁸⁰ *Xiesheng* series means a series of phonetic compounds which share the same phonetic element.

⁸¹ *Zhang Taiyan quanji* 章太炎全集 [Complete works of Zhang Taiyan], vol. 7 (Shanghai: Shanghai

should not be overlooked when tracing the source of a word's meaning. However, Zhang's broad phonetic alternation of cognate words led to arbitrariness in his judgement of them.⁸²

Huang Kan 黃侃 (1886–1935), an expert in historical phonology, emphasised the link between historical phonology and ancient meaning. He claimed that phonology and glossing spring from the same source because meaning was inherently contained in the sound when characters were created. Sound, therefore, accords with meaning.⁸³ Huang's assertion suggests that sound is the medium to convey meaning, indicating meaning prior to the fixation of the graphic form.

Given that nearly seventy or eighty percent of the characters collected in the *Shuowen* are phonetic compounds, Shen Jianshi 沈兼士 (1887–1947) reviewed the *youwen* theory to explore the derivation of Chinese characters. In his long article titled 'Youwenshuo zai xunguxue shang zhi yange jiqi tuichan 右文說在訓詁學上之沿革及其推闡' (The Development and Evolution of the *Youwen* Theory on Exegesis), Shen offered an incisive analysis of the development of the *youwen* theory, discussing both its strengths and its weaknesses.⁸⁴ He confirmed the contribution of the *youwen* theory to word glosses while also pointed out its restriction in graphic form.

In his *Xunguxue gaiyao* 訓詁學概要 (The Outline of Exegesis), Lin Yin 林尹 (1910–1983) suggests that exegesis and phonology are the outer and inner forms of a single integrated whole. Understanding phonology is crucial to mastering exegesis. As a student of

renmin chubanshe, 1999), p. 163.

⁸² Jiang Shaoyu 蔣紹愚, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao* 古漢語詞彙綱要 [Ancient Chinese Lexicon] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1989), p. 180.

⁸³ Chen Xinxiong and Zeng Rongpan, *Wenzixue*, p. 196. The original Chinese text is: '古人制字，義本於聲，即聲是義，聲音、訓詁同出一源。'

⁸⁴ Shen Jianshi 沈兼士, 'Youwenshuo zai xunguxue shang zhi yange jiqi tuichan 右文說在訓詁學上之沿革及其推闡' [The *Youwen* Theory in the Development of Textual Studies and its Elucidation] (Shanxi: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2014).

Huang Kan, Lin Yin quotes a metaphor that his teacher once applied, namely that ‘form, sound, and meaning are like cloth, needle, and thread. When making clothes, the connection between thread and cloth relies on the go-between of the needle. Although we only see cloth and thread after the clothes are made, the clothes would not have been made without the go-between of the needle.’⁸⁵ This metaphor underscores sound’s role as a bridge between form and meaning.

As a student of Lin Yin, Chen Xinxiong 陳新雄 (1935–2012) supports his master’s ideas and suggests in his book *Wenzixue* 文字學 (Chinese Philology) that ‘Chinese philological studies do not lay stress on the structural analysis of graphic form, but on sound and meaning as embodied in language. Hence, phonology is of vital importance. Sound is critical to language. Meaning is embedded in sound and sound is recorded in form. Therefore, Huang Kan once proposed: “What phonology means for graphology and exegesis is what veins and joints are to the body.”’⁸⁶

When it comes to the study of cognate words, Wang Li’s 王力 (1900–1986) *Tongyuan zidian* 同源字典 (Etymological Dictionary) establishes strict rules for identifying such words. It states that cognate words should be semantically related and have the same or similar pronunciation, both in the initial and in the rhyme. Additionally, cognate words should come from the same root. Jiang Shaoyu 蔣紹愚 supports Wang Li’s ideas and further discusses in his *Guhanyu cihui gangyao* 古漢語詞彙綱要 (Ancient Chinese Lexicon) that the research of cognate words can be done through the following aspects: the extended meanings of a word, phonetic elements, sound glosses, as well as other exegetical materials of Old Chinese.⁸⁷ Yin

⁸⁵ Lin Yin 林尹, *Xunguxue gaiyao* 訓詁學概要 [Outline of Exegesis] (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2007), p. 53.

⁸⁶ Chen Xinxiong and Zeng Rongpan, *Wenzixue*, p. 171.

⁸⁷ Jiang Shaoyu, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 189.

Jiming's 殷寄明 *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian* 漢語同源詞大典 (Dictionary of Chinese Cognate Words) collects cognate words that share the same phonetic element. He also classifies different meanings contained in the same phonetic element.

In recent years, some studies have focused specifically on Duan's ideas. Huang Yongwu 黃永武 has listed many phonetic compounds, which are concurrently associative compounds, to exemplify Duan's principle that 'phonetic compounds with the same phonetic elements often convey a related meaning'.⁸⁸ Wang Renlu's 王仁祿 *Duanshi wenzixue* 段氏文字學 (Duan's Philology) has developed Duan's ideas about Chinese philology, particularly his ideas about the Six Principles of Character Formation.⁸⁹ Mao Yuling 毛玉玲, in her article '*Duan Yucai de yisheng shuoyi* 段玉裁的以聲說義' (Duan Yucai's Using Sound to Illustrate Meaning), has explicated Duan's principle that 'homonyms often have similar meanings'.⁹⁰ In her article '*Duan Yucai shengyi guan de zai renshi* 段玉裁聲義觀的再認識' (A Reinterpretation of Duan Yucai's Views on Phonetics and Semantics), Zhao Huixia 趙惠霞 sheds light on Duan's theory by applying it to the discovery of cognate words.⁹¹

Based on the achievements of Qing scholars in the study of historical phonology, the reconstruction of ancient pronunciation has progressed and become more accurate. Many works on historical Chinese phonology by eminent phonologists, such as Li Fang-kuei 李方桂 (1902–1987), Gong Hwangcheng 龔煌城 (1934–2010), Zheng-Zhang Shangfang 鄭張尚芳 (1933–2018), and Pan Wuyun 潘悟雲, have established sophisticated phonetic

⁸⁸ Huang Yongwu 黃永武, *Xingsheng duojian huiyi kao* 形聲多兼會意考 [Research in the Phonetic Compounds Which Are Concurrently Associative Compounds] (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1969).

⁸⁹ Wang Renlu 王仁祿, *Duanshi Wenzixue* 段氏文字學 [Duan Yucai's Philology] (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1989).

⁹⁰ Mao Yuling 毛玉玲, '*Duan Yucai de yisheng shuoyi* 段玉裁的以聲說義' [Duan Yucai's Using Sound to Illustrate Meaning], *Kunming shifan xueyuan xuebao* 昆明師範學院學報 (1983): 70–87.

⁹¹ Zhao Huixia 趙惠霞, '*Duan Yucai shengyi guan de zai renshi* 段玉裁聲義觀的再認識' [A Reinterpretation of Duan Yucai's Views on Phonetics and Semantics], *Xiandai yuwen qikan* 現代語文期刊 5 (2011): 153–154.

reconstructions of Old Chinese by employing both the traditional Chinese phonological approaches and Sino-Tibetan comparative linguistics. Moreover, scholars such as Mei Tsu-lin 梅祖麟 (1933–2023), Zheng-Zhang Shangfang, and Jin Lixin 金理新 engage in reconstructions of Old Chinese morphology and demonstrate the derivational function of affixes.

Monographs on the Chinese writing system and historical lexicology of Ancient Chinese, such as Qiu Xigui's 裘錫圭 *Wenzixue gaiyao* 文字學概要 (Chinese Writing), Jiang Shaoyu's 蔣紹愚 *Guhanyu cihui gangyao* 古漢語詞彙綱要 (Ancient Chinese Lexicon), and Zhao Keqin's 趙克勤 *Gudai hanyu cihuixue* 古代漢語詞彙學 (Lexicology of Ancient Chinese), provide a general overview of the historical lexicology of Ancient Chinese, clarifying many concepts such as cognate words, synonymous words, loan characters, ancient and modern characters, differentiated characters, etc. Furthermore, detailed overviews of the history of Chinese philology and linguistics are produced by scholars such as Wang Li 王力 (1900–1986), Pu Zhizhen 濮之珍 (1922–2023), Zhao Zhenduo 趙振鐸, He Jiuying 何九盈, and Hu Qiguang 胡奇光.

In addition, many ancient manuscripts have been unearthed in recent years, such as bamboo slips, silk scripts, and oracle bone inscriptions. These newly excavated manuscripts help us to understand character derivation more comprehensively. There are a number of works on Chinese palaeography and research on excavated bamboo manuscripts, such as Zhao Cheng's 趙誠 *Jiagu wenzixue gangyao* 甲骨文字學綱要 (Outline of Oracle Bone Inscriptions Studies), He Linyi's 何琳儀 (1943–2017) *Zhanguo guwen zidian* 戰國古文字典 (Dictionary of the Warring States Scripts), Li Xueqin's 李學勤 (1933–2019) *Ziyuan* 字源 (The Origin of Chinese Characters), Bai Yulan's 白於藍 *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian* 簡牘帛書通假字字典 (Dictionary of Variant Characters in Bamboo and Silk Texts), and Chen

Sipeng's 陳斯鵬 *Chuxi jianbo zhong zixing yu yinyi guanxi yanjiu* 楚系簡帛中字形與音義關係研究 (Study on the Relationship between Forms, Sounds, and Meanings in Chu Bamboo and Silk Scripts). These works on unearthed ancient manuscripts not only update the study of palaeography but also benefit the collation of received ancient texts and provide important materials for the study of Old Chinese phonology. They also explore the relationship between characters and words in the interaction between language and the writing system.

While previous research has widely recognised Duan's contribution to Chinese philology, most studies have only focused on Duan's achievements in historical phonology rather than his application of phonology to exegesis. There is a shortage of studies on the comprehensive analysis and specific evaluation of Duan's theory of *shengyi tongyuan* and how he applied related principles in the *Duanzhu* in detail. In addition, to evaluate Duan and his work, it is essential to contextualise him within the intellectual developments of Qing China. This involves examining both the similarities and peculiarities of Duan's approaches in comparison with his contemporaries, such as Wang Niansun. Furthermore, the shortcomings of the *Duanzhu* need to be identified in light of modern philological achievements. Thus, this dissertation attempts to contribute to Sinological knowledge by providing a deeper understanding of Duan's principles as presented in the *Duanzhu* and by reflecting on Duan's revolutionary insights as well as his limitations.

1.5 Methodology and Materials

This study focuses mainly on Duan's approach and insights in word glosses, seeking to explore how his principles are applied to solve semantic problems, especially in his annotations to the *Shuowen*. First, I contextualise Duan in his own time, outline his revolutionary impact on Qing scholarship, and make comparisons between Duan and his

contemporary scholars. The aim is to illustrate Duan's academic characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. Second, I present Duan's statements related to *shengyi tongyuan* in the *Duanzhu* and offer a comprehensive analysis of Duan's principles. In addition, I collect numerous examples from the *Duanzhu* to test Duan's theory and related principles. Third, I present a number of examples, mainly from the *Duanzhu*, to examine the application of Duan's principles to word glosses and Duan's approach of *yinsheng qiuyi* to solving exegetical problems in ancient texts. Methods of collection, analysis, induction, and deduction are employed as part of this process.

Throughout the study, the transliteration system of *Pinyin* romanisation is used. Middle Chinese forms are distinguished from Old Chinese forms by the absence of an asterisk. Regarding the reconstruction of Old Chinese by modern scholarship, there are dictionaries such as Axel Schuessler's *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* and reconstructions such as Baxter and Sagart's *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*. Currently, research in this field remains ongoing. For the purpose of my dissertation, I use Li Fang-kuei's 李方桂 (1902–1987) reconstruction system. Li's research on Old Chinese phonology is built upon the achievements of Qing scholars, making it more appropriate for comparison with Duan's research. Additionally, Li's reconstruction system is widely accepted in both Chinese and Western academia. Li's system revolutionised the field when it was published in 1971 and has remained extremely influential to this day. It synthesised a number of conceptual breakthroughs proposed by Li and others in the field (such as Yakhontov and Pulleyblank).⁹² As Jerry Norman remarked, 'F. K. Li's *Shangguyin yanjiu* 上古音研究 (Studies on Archaic Chinese Phonology) at the present time presents the most complete, up-to-date, and internally

⁹² Zev Handel, 'A Concise Introduction to Old Chinese Phonology', *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman* by James A. Matisoff (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003), p. 548.

consistent reconstruction of Old Chinese.’⁹³ Therefore, for practical reasons, I have chosen to use Li’s reconstruction, not because it is necessarily the best reconstruction, but to better assess Duan’s achievements and limitations which are part of the same tradition and also represent a much more advanced system. To search for Li’s reconstructions of characters in Old Chinese, I use the website ‘*Hanzi gujinyin ziliaoku* 漢字古今音資料庫’ (Chinese Character Readings, CCR)⁹⁴, set up by the Institute of Linguistics, Taiwan Academia Sinica, and National Taiwan University. In some parts of my dissertation, I also refer to Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction system in the footnotes, where relevant, in terms of the derivation by affixes and tones.⁹⁵ For Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction, I use version 1.1 (20 September, 2014) as a reference.⁹⁶

Engaging with studies of the *Duanzhu*, this dissertation also refers to other classical works on philology, such as *Guangyun* 廣韻 (Expanded Rhymes), Yu Xingwu’s 于省吾 (1896–1984) *Jiagu wenzi gulin* 甲骨文字詁林 (The Collective Commentaries of Oracle Bone Inscriptions), Li Pu’s 李圃 (1934–2012) *Guwenzi gulin* 古文字詁林 (The Collective Commentaries of Ancient Scripts), He Linyi’s 何琳儀 (1943–2017) *Zhanguo guwen zidian* 戰國古文字典 (Dictionary of the Warring States Scripts), Li Xueqin’s 李學勤 (1933–2019) *Ziyuan* 字源 (The Origin of Chinese Characters), Wang Li’s 王力 (1900–1986) *Tongyuan zidian* 同源字典 (Etymological Dictionary), Axel Schuessler’s *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, and Yin Jiming’s 殷寄明 *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian* 漢語同源詞大典

⁹³ Jerry Norman, *Chinese* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 62.

⁹⁴ *Hanzi gujinyin ziliaoku* 漢字古今音資料庫 [Chinese Character Readings, CCR]. Accessed 7 May 2024. <https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ccr/>

⁹⁵ The list of Old Chinese affixes is still open to debate. According to Sagart, widely recognised affixation is prefix /*s-/ and a voicing prefix /*N-/, as well as suffix /*-s/. Less widely accepted are prefixes /*k-/, /*p-/, /*m-/, /*t-/, and /*q-/, and infix /*-r-/. The footnotes in this dissertation only present the derivational function of the widely accepted affixes, namely, prefix /*s-/ and /*N-/, and suffix /*-s/.

⁹⁶ Baxter-Sagart, *Old Chinese Reconstruction*, version 1.1 (20 September 2014). Accessed 7 May 2024. <https://ocbaxtersagart.lsa.umich.edu/>

(Dictionary of Chinese Cognate Words). Citations from the ancient texts are quoted mainly from *Wenyuan'ge sikuquanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature from Wenyuan'ge) and *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Continuation of the Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature).

1.6 Outline of Chapters

The dissertation consists of the following six chapters :

The introduction in Chapter One sets out the research objectives, intellectual context, methodology, an outline of the chapters, followed by a literature review. Chapter Two provides an overview of related scholarship on the relationship between sound and meaning in Western and in Chinese philology. Chapter Three contextualises Duan Yucai and his work against the background of advances in scholarship in the 18th-Century. This includes, in particular, the impact of Dai Zhen on Duan Yucai and a comparison between Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun. The chapter examines common ground between these three scholars and also where their approaches differ. The aim is to place Duan within the intellectual developments of Qing China. Chapter Four focuses on Duan's engagement with the *Shuowen*. This chapter offers a comprehensive elucidation and analysis, along with relevant examples, of Duan's principles and their implications. Chapter Five aims to provide an application of Duan's principles in word glosses and his approach of *yinsheng qiuyi* to solving exegetical problems, mainly presented in the *Duanzhu*. The final chapter provides a succinct conclusion encompassing Duan's accomplishments, limitations, outlining the gap in knowledge that separates Duan's work from the advances made by modern linguists, and the intended contribution of this dissertation.

Chapter Two: The Relationship between Sound and Meaning in Western and Chinese

Philology

This chapter is divided into three parts: Firstly, I discuss sound symbolism and its role in both Western and Chinese philology, namely how sound contributes to the construction of meaning, particularly regarding the origin of language. Secondly, I present discussions on word family by modern scholars. Thirdly, I briefly survey scholarship on the relationship between sound and meaning in the history of the Chinese language.

2.1 Sound Symbolism in Western Philology

The relationship between sound and meaning is a question that has also intrigued many Western scholars. The subject of phono-semantics was sporadically discussed in religious and mystical texts during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance periods,⁹⁷ possibly due to the flourishing of literature, philosophy, and nascent linguistics during those eras. More recently, during the first decade of the 20th-Century, scholars such as Edward Sapir (1884–1939) and Dwight L. Bolinger (1907–1992) sought to establish connections between sounds and meanings. They attempted to test the universality and uniformity of phono-semantics in many languages through experiments and examples, which will be discussed later. However, there are some who oppose the phono-semantic approach. The most celebrated of these opponents is Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), the pioneer of structuralism, who claimed that a

⁹⁷ Margaret Magnus, *What's in a Word? Studies in Phono-semantics*. PhD dissertation (Norway: University of Trondheim, 2001), p. 14.

regular correspondence between sound and meaning would render linguistic change impossible and cause us all to be speaking the same language.⁹⁸

Saussure argued that the link between signal and signification is arbitrary. The term [arbitrary] implies simply that the signal (sound) is unmotivated: that is to say arbitrary in relation to its signification (idea), with which it has no natural connexion in reality.⁹⁹ Since the development of linguistics in the 20th-Century, research on sound symbolism has challenged Saussure's standpoint and has provided evidence to demonstrate that there is, to some extent, an intrinsic link between the signifier and the signified. Jonathan Smith, for instance, argues that 'while the relationship between sound and meaning within the lexicon is in general arbitrary, languages may also feature specific, statistically significant relationships between particular sounds and particular semantic domains, whether language specific or motivated by more general cognitive tendencies.'¹⁰⁰

A discussion of this topic can be dated back to a dialogue between two prominent philosophers over two thousand years ago.

Socrates: Imagine that we have no voice and no tongue but want to communicate with one another... Would we not imitate the nature of the thing: lifting the hands to heaven would mean lightness and upwardness. Heaviness and downwardness would be expressed by letting them drop to the ground.

Hermogenes: I do not see that we could do anything else.

Socrates: And when we want to express ourselves with the voice or the tongue or the mouth, the expression is simply the imitation of what we want to express?

Hermogenes: I think it must be so.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Margaret Magnus, *What's in a Word? Studies in Phono-semantics*. PhD dissertation, p. 24.

⁹⁹ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 79.

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Smith, 'Sound Symbolism in the Reduplicative Vocabulary of the Shijing', *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, ed. Zong-Qi Cai, vol. 2 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 258.

¹⁰¹ Plato, 'Cratylus', trans. Benjamin Jowett. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 421–474.

Socrates (470–ca.399 BCE) believed that it is the role of the name giver (called by Plato the ‘rule-setter’) first to form primary names according to a set of mimetic associations between certain sounds or letters and certain qualities possessed by the referents and later to form secondary names on the basis of pre-existing primary names.¹⁰² On Socrates’ account of primary sounds, the ‘r’ sound naturally conveys motion, the ‘l’ sound sliding, the ‘i’ sound lightness and fineness, the ‘g’ sound stickiness, and so on. Socrates had insisted on that the same meaning can be conveyed with different sounds, just as the same tool can be made in different metals.¹⁰³ Socrates’ account suggests that there are different aspects of a concept that can be expressed by different sounds. This may serve as a counterpoint to the arbitrariness of the signifier-signified relationship proposed by Saussure. Gérard Genette (1930–2018) suggests that Socrates’ observations were not trivially mistaken nor was he in fact contradicting himself. Rather he was merely stating that neither extremist view could be wholly maintained. That is, it was neither true that phonetics had no effect whatsoever on word semantics, nor did it wholly determine word semantics.¹⁰⁴

In her work *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language, and Civilization*, Deborah Levine remarks that the contention that the sound and meaning of a word correspond perfectly was used in two diametrically opposed ways by Greek thinkers. For ‘Cratylus’ in Plato’s (427–ca.348 BCE) dialogue the claim that there is a perfect fit between word and object compels him to conclude that the name-setter was divine. Epicurus (341–ca.270 BCE), on the other hand, argued that names are prompted by nature with men’s feelings and impressions giving rise directly to sounds because he wanted to explain human accomplishments without

¹⁰² Barnaby Taylor, *Lucretius and the Language of Nature* (London: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 117.

¹⁰³ David Sedley, ‘The Etymologies in Plato’s Cratylus’, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 118 (1998): 148.

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Magnus, *What’s in a Word? Studies in Phono-semantics*. PhD dissertation, p. 12.

allotting any role to deities. Epicurus argued for a natural origin of language. He asserted that there is a natural *fit* between word and object, since impressions and feelings shape the very vocal sound.¹⁰⁵ According to Epicurus, the ‘natural fit’ rather than a divine name-setter, suggests that certain feelings can naturally evoke the articulation of specific sounds, which correspond to people’s cognition of objects.

Modern scholars such as Michae Wigodsky, David Konstan, and David Sedley have also argued in favour of the view that the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus regarded the first natural sounds as closely corresponding not only to emotions that provoked the specific sounds but also to the objects that were, in each case, the cause of these emotions.¹⁰⁶ In early history, according to Epicurus, humans were naturally disposed to utter certain sound patterns compulsively, in response to certain sensory stimuli.¹⁰⁷ From this point of view, sensory feelings prompt people to use appropriate sounds to convey meanings.

From the above arguments, it could be suggested that language has a natural origin in the coordination between sounds and things. There must be a reason for assigning a word to a thing, but we cannot say that there must be a perfect correspondence between words and things. Sound symbolism, which is related to the sound-meaning relationship with regard to the origin of language, has attracted much scholarly attention during the past few decades. Reflection on this topic is beneficial not only for pondering the correspondence between words and objects but also for exploring potential shared etymologies across languages. Additionally, it demonstrates the acoustic functions of language in literary artistry featuring phonetic or phonorhetorical patterns.

¹⁰⁵ Deborah Levine Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language, and Civilization* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 171–3.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Verlinsky, ‘Epicurus and his Predecessors on the Origin of Language’, *Language and Learning, Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age*, eds. Dorothea Frede and Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 66.

¹⁰⁷ Barnaby Taylor, *Lucretius and the Language of Nature*, p. 20.

Sound symbolism is a common linguistic phenomenon in many languages. Some examples of phonesthemic phenomena can be found in Indo-European languages. For example, some phonemes can produce sound effects that enhance the expression of meaning.¹⁰⁸ English words like ‘tiny, little, slim’ and French words like ‘petit, diminué’ contain the high front vowel /i/ and convey the sense of ‘little and light’. Conversely, English words like ‘large, vast, maximum’ and French words like ‘grand, Gargantua’ containing the low vowel /a/ match the sense of ‘large’. However, there are also some exceptions, such as the word ‘big’ whose vowel is /i/ but bears the opposite sense of ‘small’.

John Wallis (1616–1703) identified certain consonant clusters that may carry certain meanings. For example, he noted that ‘wr’ often signifies obliquity or twisting, as seen in words like wry, wrong, wreck, and wrist, while ‘br’ indicates a breach or splitting apart that is often violent and generally loud as in words like break, breach, brook.¹⁰⁹ Otto Jespersen (1860–1943) once suggested that sounds may sometimes carry symbolic meaning, although this may not be the case for all words. There is no denying, however, that there are certain words regarded instinctively as adequate to convey the ideas that they represent, while the sounds in others are regarded as more or less incongruous with their meanings.¹¹⁰ Jespersen referred to the fact that we subconsciously form associations between sounds and meanings.

Edward Sapir (1884–1939) explored whether phonemes, when isolated from words, have symbolic significance. In an experiment, he asked participants to associate two invented words, ‘mal’ and ‘mil’, with either a small table or a large table. Sapir reported that eighty-one

¹⁰⁸ Lin Yun 林芸 and Xie Min 謝閩, ‘Yingyu yinsu xiangzheng de tantao 英語音素象徵的探討’ [Inquires of Melopoeia], *Jiangxi dianli zhigong daxue xuebao* 江西電力職工大學學報 4 (2002): 60.

¹⁰⁹ Margaret Magnus, *What’s in a Word? Studies in Phono-semantics*. PhD dissertation.

¹¹⁰ Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1922), p. 398.

percent of people thought that ‘mal’ represented the larger table and ‘mil’ the smaller table.¹¹¹ The fact that people generally associate the vowel /a/ with something large and the vowel /i/ with something small represents an unconscious perception of sound symbolism in people’s minds. Sapir’s experiment, to some extent, demonstrates the bond between sound and meaning during the early period of human language development.

Leonard Bloomfield (1887–1949) emphasised the importance of phono-semantics in the study of languages. He asserted that, since in human speech, different sounds have different meanings, studying the coordination of certain sounds with certain meanings amounts to studying a language.¹¹²

Dwight L. Bolinger (1907–1992) observed that language is not only necessary for the formulation of thought but is actually part of the thinking process itself.¹¹³ The following examples are provided by Bolinger to highlight the link between sound and meaning as embodied in alphabetical scripts.

There seems to be a connection, transcending individual languages, between the sounds of the vowels produced with the tongue high in the mouth and to the front, especially the vowel sound in *wee*, *teeny*, and the meaning of ‘smallness’, while those with tongue low suggest ‘largeness’. The size of the mouth cavity—this *ee* sound has the smallest opening of all—is matched with the meaning. We *chip* a small piece but *chop* a large one; a *slip* is smaller than *slab* and a *nib* is smaller than *knob*.¹¹⁴

Bolinger also concluded that, in addition to vowels, small units of consonants also bear meaning:

One tempting example is the cross-patterning of /gl/ ‘phenomena of light’ and /fl/ ‘phenomena of movement’ with (1) /itr/ ‘intermittent’, glitter <-> flitter. (2) /ow/ ‘steady’, glow <-> flow...¹¹⁵

In addition, writers are usually sensitive to phono-semantics. They employ the sensory

¹¹¹ Edward Sapir, ‘A Study in Phonetic Elementism’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 12 (1929): 225.

¹¹² Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 27.

¹¹³ Dwight L Bolinger, *Aspects of Language* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 236.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 24.

¹¹⁵ Dwight L. Bolinger, ‘Rime, Assonance, and Morpheme Analysis’, *Word* vol. 6, 2 (1950): 117–136.

effect of sound to not only enhance the rhythmic effect, but also to reinforce themes and motives in their work. In Jonathan Swift's (1667–1745) *Gulliver's Travel*, the strategic use of the vowel /i/ in naming the inhabitants of the tiny country 'Lilliput' exemplifies the deliberate connection between sound and meaning in literary works. Swift further enhanced the imagery of 'smallness' by employing words containing the vowel /i/ to vividly describe scenes within Lilliput. For instance, he depicted 'a young girl threading an *invisible needle* with *invisible silk*',¹¹⁶ effectively leveraging phono-semantics to intensify the portrayal of diminutiveness and create an aesthetic effect.

Likewise, in Alfred Tennyson's (1809–1892) poem *The Brook*, one of the stanzas reads as follows: 'I chatter over stony ways. In little *sharps* and *trebles*, I *bubble* into eddying *bays*, I *babble* on the *pebbles*.'¹¹⁷ The repetitive use of plosive consonants /b-/ and /p-/ in words like '*brook, bubble, babble*' contributes to a brisk and vigorous acoustic effect, enabling readers to envision a running and gurgling stream. The combination of vowels /æ/ and /e/ further enhances the imagery of a clear, flowing brook with tinkling drops splashing onto pebbles. Poetry is a genre of refined literary work that tends to use fewer words to create a greater sensory effect. The special sound effects of the chosen words can reinforce the artistic sense, and this in turn makes the theme more explicit. As Paul Valéry expresses, 'The power of poetic language is not in its sense but in its sound.'¹¹⁸

Mary LeCron Foster (1914–2001), an American anthropological linguist, investigates the fundamental symbolic meaning of vowels and consonants in the search for the origins of

¹¹⁶ Free eBooks at Planet eBook.com. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travel*, p. 64. Accessed 7 May 2024. <https://www.planetebook.com/free-ebooks/gullivers-travels>.

¹¹⁷ All Poetry. Alfred Tennyson, *The Brook*. Accessed 7 May 2024. <https://allpoetry.com/poem/8473275-The-Brook-by-Alfred-Lord-Tennyson>.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Greene, 'Language, Signs and Magic', in *Envisioning Magic: a Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, eds. P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 256–257.

language. She has a corresponding view that the gestures of the mouth in speech articulation were directly related to the meaning of the sound produced.¹¹⁹

Therefore, the meaning in literary works can be conveyed through both semantic expression and phonetic sound to emphasise sensory effects. Sound and meaning appear to be inseparable, as noted by the poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744): ‘The sound must seem an echo to the sense.’¹²⁰

2.2 Sound Symbolism in Chinese Philology

Chinese philosophers of the Spring and Autumn period (770–ca.476 BCE) and Warring States (476–ca.221 BCE) period engaged in discussions akin to those of their Western counterparts, such as Socrates and Epicurus, concerning the connection between names and objects. For instance, in *Guanzi* 管子, a philosophical text attributed to Guang Zhong 管仲 (725–ca.645 BCE), it is stated that ‘names are originated from substance’ (*ming shengyu shi* 名生於實),¹²¹ indicating that names are derived from the nature of the object. *Zhuangzi* 莊子, another philosophical text attributed to Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (369–ca.286 BCE), had a different view, suggesting that ‘a thing has a name because we call it so’ (*wu weizhi shiran* 物謂之使然),¹²² implying that names are arbitrarily assigned by people. *Xunzi* 荀子 expressed a similar sentiment, stating that ‘names have no intrinsic object. They are bound to some reality by agreement in order to name that object. The object becomes fixed, the custom is established,

¹¹⁹ Mary LeCron Foster, ‘The Symbolic Structure of Primordial Language’, *Human Evolution: Biosocial Perspectives*, eds. Sherwood L. Washburn and Elizabeth R. McCown (Menlo Park: Benjamin/Cummings Pub. Co., 1978), pp. 77–121.

¹²⁰ Online Poetry Soup. Alexander Pope. *An Essay on Criticism*. Accessed 7 May 2024. https://www.poetrysoup.com/famous/poem/sound_and_sense_2438.

¹²¹ Guan Zhong 管仲, *Guanzi* 管子, ed. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature), vol. 729 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2013), p. 194.

¹²² *Zhuangzi* 莊子, trans. Wang Rongpei 汪榕培 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), p. 23.

and it is called the name of that object.’¹²³ Xunzi’s view aligns with that of Saussure, who posited that the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary.

The word glosses employed by Chinese Han scholars reflected a distinct perspective, imbuing their philosophical viewpoints into the relationship between the signifier and the signified.¹²⁴ As remarked by Roy A. Miller, ‘no name of anything, no word in the Chinese language, was thought to be of and in itself arbitrary, or in any way the result of an arbitrary agreement on the part of the society employing it. Everything in the cosmos and on earth was the way it was, and every word, or name, was the word or name it was, for a reason: and that reason was a reflection of the cosmic order...’.¹²⁵

Some Qing scholars also suggested that there existed connections between the signifier and the signified. Duan Yucai (1735–1815) stated that in terms of the origin of character creation, sound came after meaning; form came after sound.¹²⁶ Accordingly, if meaning precedes sound, people might intentionally use certain sounds to represent certain qualities of the referents according to their sensory perception of the objects. The characteristics of the articulation of these sounds naturally correspond to the characteristics of the signified.

¹²³ *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [Collected Notes of *Xunzi*], collected notes by Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), p. 420. The original Chinese text is: ‘名無固實，約之以命實。約定俗成，謂之實名。’ Translation quoted from: *Xunzi*, trans. John Knoblock, vol. II (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 717.

¹²⁴ For example, in the *Shuowen*, the character *xing* 性 (natural instincts) is explained as ‘the *Yang* (positive) energy of humans signifies inherent goodness. 性 is comprised of *xin* 心 (heart-mind) with *sheng* 生 (birth) as its phonetic’ (性，人之陽氣，性善者也。从心，生聲). See Duan Yucai’s *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 506. In the *Shuowen*, the character *mu* 木 (wood) is explained as ‘to emit, meaning to emerge from the ground. 木 represents the element of the east’ (木，冒也。冒地而生。東方之行). See Duan Yucai’s *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 241. These two examples connote the perceptions of Yin and Yang (*yinyang* 陰陽) and the Five Agents (*wuxing* 五行).

¹²⁵ Roy A. Miller, ‘The Far East’, in *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. XIII (Hague: Mouton and Co. B.V., Publisher, 1975), p. 1217.

¹²⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 434.

Chen Li 陳澧 (1810–1882) pointed out in his *Dongshu dushu ji* 東塾讀書記 (The East Side House Reading Notes): ‘The pronunciation of the word “*da* 大 /*dadh/ (large)” is large, while the pronunciation of the word “*xiao* 小 /*sjagwx/ (small)” is small; the sound of the word “*chang* 長 /*drjang/ (long)” is long, whereas the sound of the word “*duan* 短 /*tuanx/ (short)” is short...Therefore, there is a perfect match between the vocalisation of the words and the meanings that they express which results in a vivid sensory effect.’¹²⁷ Liu Shiwei 劉師培 (1884–1919) made similar statements in his *Zhengming yulun* 正名隅論 (Some Discussions on Correcting the Use of Name), where he contended:

The spoken language created by the ancients was not arbitrary. Sound intentionally matches meaning. There are probably two sources for the phonetic origins of words. One is to depict the sounds that are conceived in people’s minds. The other is to mimic the sound that is produced by objects. Examples can be found in the so-called ‘six emotions’: pleasure, anger, sorrow, fear, love, and disgust. For example, the phonetic property of the word ‘*xi* 喜 /*hjəgx/’ (pleasure) is consonant with a giggling voice. The pronunciation of ‘*nu* 怒 /*nagx/’ (anger) creates the sound of anger. Likewise, the pronunciation of ‘*ai* 哀 /*əd/’ (sorrow) is similar to a grieving voice.¹²⁸

Chen Li’s and Liu Shiwei’s views echoed Zhang Taiyan’s 章太炎 (1868–1936) statements in his article *Yuyan yuanqi shuo* 語言緣起說 (Theory of the Origin of Language) that, ‘As for language, it does not arise out of the void. That a horse is called “horse”, and a cow is called “cow” is not just a deliberate idea or foolish designation: all languages have a root’.¹²⁹

Liu Ze 劉疇 (1891–1978) concluded that the characters belonging to the *ming* 明 /*m-/

¹²⁷ Chen Li 陳澧 (1810–1882), *Dongshu dushu ji* 東塾讀書記 [The East Side House Reading Notes], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 1160, p. 607.

¹²⁸ Liu Shiwei *quanji* 劉師培全集 [Complete Works of Liu Shiwei], vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1997), p. 222. The original Chinese text is: ‘古人之言，非苟焉而已，既以此意，即像此意製此音，故退考字音之起源，約有二故：一為像人意所製之音，一為像物音所製之音，而要之皆自然之音也。例如喜怒哀懼愛惡，古人稱為六情，而喜字之音，即像嘻笑之聲，怒字之音即像盛怒之聲，哀字之音即像悲痛之聲……’

¹²⁹ Zhang Taiyan, *Guogu lunheng*, p. 31. The original Chinese text is: ‘語言者，不憑虛起。呼馬而馬，呼牛而牛，此必非恣意妄稱也，諸言語必有根。’ Translation quoted from: Wolfgang Behr, ‘Some Ideas on the Origin of Language in Late Imperial China’, CCK-ISC, KU Praha, X.12-16, 2006, p. 9.

initial category in Old Chinese often have similar meanings. The *ming* 明 initial is a bilabial consonant whose articulation requires the touch between the two lips. Such pronunciation is often related to the notion of ‘end’ (*mo* 末).¹³⁰ Zhu Guiyao 朱桂耀 made similar statements, noting that the articulation of the initial consonant /*m-/ requires both lips to touch each other. In contrast, therefore, to a sharp and forced plosive, a bilabial is relatively blunt and involves the touching together of the lips in their entirety. This arouses a feeling of generality and ambiguity. At the same time, the sound of a nasal consonant is muffled and low, which, to some extent, makes one experience a sense of blurring and confusion. This can be illustrated by the words *miao* 渺 /*mjiagwx/ (vague), *mang* 茫 /*mang/ (boundless), *miao* 邈 /*mjiagwx/ (remote), *meng* 夢 /*mjəŋh/ (dream), and *mei* 寐 /*mjiəd/ (sleep).¹³¹

Wang Ning 王寧 draws attention to the analogical association between certain phonemes and certain meanings in her Book *Xunguxue yuanli* 訓詁學原理 (Principles of Exegesis). She proposes that the pronunciations of words with the lateral /*l-/ as initial in Old Chinese, such as ‘*lin* 淋 /*gljəm/ (to drench), *li* 瀝 /*lik/ (to drip), *liu* 流 /*ljəgw/ (to flow), *lian* 漣 /*ljan/ (to ripple), *lao* 滂 /*lagwh/ (to be inundated), and *liao* 潦 /*lagwx/ (a heavy rain)’ are associated with the phonetic property of dripping water. Words such as ‘*ruan* 軟 /*njuax/ (soft), *ru* 蠕 /*njuax/ (to wriggle), *rou* 柔 /*njəgw/ (tender), and *rong* 茸 /*njung/ (downy)’ have the nasal initial consonant /*n-/ in Old Chinese, whose articulation imparts a sense of softness.¹³²

In addition to initials, rhymes are also considered to have sound effects. Liu Shipai put forward that characters belonging to the rhyme groups of *zhi* 之 /*-ək/, /*-əg/ and *geng* 耕 /*-

¹³⁰ Liu Ze 劉疇, ‘*Gusheng tongniu zhi ziyi duo xiangjin shuo* 古聲同紐之字義多相近說’ [Characters Belonging to the Same Ancient Initial Often Share a Similar Meaning], *Zhiyan banyuekan* 製言半月刊 9 (1936): 8.

¹³¹ Lin Yin 林尹, *Wenzixue gaishuo* 文字學概說 [General Introduction to Chinese Philology] (Taipei: zhengzhong shuju, 2009), p. 141.

¹³² Wang Ning 王寧, *Xunguxue yuanli* 訓詁學原理 [Principles of Exegesis] (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji chubanshe, 1996), p. 146.

ing/ are often associated with the meaning of ‘upright growth’. Characters belonging to the rhyme groups of *yang* 陽 /*-ang/, *qin* 侵 /*-əm/, and *dong* 東 /*-ung/ are often associated with the meanings of ‘beautiful, great, tall and bright’.¹³³ Axel Schuessler mentions in his *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* that certain meanings are associated with certain codas. For instance, words that signify movement with an abrupt endpoint often end in /*-k/. Words with the meaning of ‘shutting or closing’, which also implies an endpoint, tend to end in a final /*-p/. Words that imply ‘keeping in a closed mouth’ tend to end in a final /*-m/.¹³⁴

Rhyme is not only pursuant to language and diction, intonation and form, it also serves to express one’s thoughts and feelings and achieve the artistic effect of mutual correspondence in sound and emotion.¹³⁵ Chen Xinxiong notes in his article ‘*Shengyun yu wenqing zhi guanxi* 聲韻與文情之關係’ (The Coordination between Sound and Literary Sentiments) that Chinese poets often emphasise sound effects and are especially fond of rhymes to express emotions. In classical Chinese poetry, rhymes with an open ending like the rhyme *you* 幽 /*-jəu/ often evoke a sense of pleasure and leisure. Rhymes with a bilabial nasal ending, such as the rhyme *qin* 侵 /*-jəm/, are congruent with the notion of a heavy heart. Rhymes with a plosive ending, such as the rhyme *zhi* 職 /*-jək/ with an implosive consonant /*-k/, are appropriate for expressing an anxious and urgent sentiment.¹³⁶

Chen Jiebai 陳介白 points out in his work *Rhetoric* the importance of rhyme in phonoaesthetic devices, noting that the function of rhyme lies in harmonising the emotions and changing the mood...If the rhyming is extensive, then one perceives the semantics as

¹³³ Liu Shipai *quanji*, vol. 3, p. 45.

¹³⁴ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 27.

¹³⁵ Jeffrey R. Tharsen, *Chinese Euphonics: Phonetic Patterns, Phonorhetoric and Literary Artistry in Early Chinese Narrative Texts*. PhD dissertation (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2015), pp. 36–42.

¹³⁶ Chen Xinxiong 陳新雄, ‘*Shengyun yu wenqing zhi guanxi* 聲韻與文情之關係’ [The Coordination between Sound and Literary Sentiments], *Hanxue yanjiu jikan* 漢學研究集刊 8 (2009): 12–14.

relaxed; if the rhyming is dense, then the semantics become urgent; if the rhyme shifts, then the meaning shifts.¹³⁷ Daniel Hsieh also demonstrates the importance of sound effects in the appreciation of poetry, noting that ‘one of the most striking aspects of the *Shijing* lyrics may well be their musicality; one does not truly appreciate and understand these poems until one can hear them.’¹³⁸ The primary function of the ‘expressive’ words in the *Shijing* is to express via sound an emotive response to an external scene and to inspire readers to a more nuanced appreciation of ancient Chinese poetry.¹³⁹ Thus, the poetry often reflects a clever pairing between phonetic form and content.

However, scholars such as Jiang Shaoyu 蔣紹愚 argue that the theory of sound-meaning relations proposed by Liu Shipai and Liu Ze is factually incorrect. For example, the character *ming* 明 /*mjiaŋ/ (bright) has the initial consonant /*m-/ and belongs to the rhyme group of *yang* 陽 /*-aŋ/. Should it be related to the sense of ‘end’ or the sense of ‘beautiful, great, tall and bright’? The character *mang* 盲 /*mraŋ/ (blind) also has the initial consonant /*m-/ and belongs to the rhyme group of *yang* 陽 /*-aŋ/. Should it have a similar meaning to 明 (bright)?¹⁴⁰

Although many scholars argue that the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, based on the above evidence, it can be concluded that in both Chinese and Western languages, there is some degree of correlation between phonetics and semantics. Their connection is not entirely arbitrary. As Ren Jifang 任繼昉 states that, according to the principle of materialistic dialectics, every phenomenon has a reason for its occurrence. There is no effect without a cause, while there is no cause without an effect. It is impossible that the

¹³⁷ Chen Jiebai 陳介白, *Xiucixue* 修辭學 [Rhetoric] (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1931), p. 195. Translation quoted from: Jeffrey R. Tharsen, *Chinese Euphonics: Phonetic Patterns, Phonorhetoric and Literary Artistry in Early Chinese Narrative Texts*. PhD dissertation, p. 34.

¹³⁸ Daniel Hsieh, ‘Final Particles and Rhyming in the *Shih-Ching*’, *Oriens* no. 35, p.273.

¹³⁹ *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, ed. Zong-Qi Cai, vol. 2, p. 251.

¹⁴⁰ Jiang Shaoyu, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 177.

naming of an object, as a phenomenon, is unreasonable. The behaviour of humans, as rational animals, is expected to be rational, and human language is no exception. Thus, Ren Jifang suggests that the sounds in the original period of language might have been prompted by nature, reflecting people's emotions, expressing feelings, imitating sounds, or depicting the shapes of objects.¹⁴¹

Because the sources of the sounds regarding the origin of language are so distant from us, most of them are unknown. Therefore, the recognition of the combinations of sounds and meanings during this period is insufficient due to the lack of research and materials. Accordingly, we cannot claim that there is a perfect correspondence between words and objects. As Pu Zhizhen 濮之珍 (1922–2023) claims, there is no necessary relationship between word and object at the beginning; nevertheless, not all the relationships between words and objects are arbitrary. Any new word formation is restricted to the rule of the language system. Language cannot and must not be arbitrary symbols.¹⁴² Phonesthetic patterns can be found in different languages. There are certain correspondences between words and objects, or between certain phonemes and senses. As declared by Joseph Edkins (1823–1905) in his 'Defence of the Old Chinese Pronunciation', philology, from whatever perspective it is approached, refers to unity.¹⁴³

2.3 Some Discussions on Word Families

Sound symbolism primarily represents sound-meaning relations during the early stages of language evolution. As language evolved, the combinations of sounds and meanings

¹⁴¹ Ren Jifang 任繼昉, *Hanyu yuyuanxue* 漢語語源學 [Chinese Etymology] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2004), pp. 65–86.

¹⁴² Pu Zhizhen 濮之珍 (1922–2023), *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi* 中國語言學史 [History of Chinese Linguistics] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2017), p. 35.

¹⁴³ Joseph Edkins, 'Defence of the Old Chinese Pronunciation', *China Review* 22, 5 (1897): 731–732.

gradually became fixed. With language becoming increasingly complex, more new words were created, many of which were derived from the old ones. The derived words stemming from the same root are akin to members of a family originating from the same ancestor. A word family essentially refers to a group of words that originate from a common root, sharing connections in both sounds and meanings.

Traditional Chinese research on word families is exemplified by the utilisation of sound glosses and the *youwen* theory. The *youwen* theory exerted considerable influence on the works of Qing philologists such as Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, and Wang Niansun, who frequently referenced it. However, a series of phonetic compounds that are semantically related may not be considered a genuine word family in light of contemporary scholarship. The members of a word family are often, but not necessarily, written with characters that share the same phonetic element. Schuessler cautions against relying too heavily on graph-based etymology, warning of the risks of misinterpretation or over-interpretation. Although *xiesheng* series often provide etymological hint, two words should not be assumed to be etymologically related just because they share the same phonetic element. Our reliance on phonological patterns occasionally leads to the conclusion that words are related even though they look superficially different.¹⁴⁴ Boltz echoes a similar viewpoint, asserting that,

A word family is defined as a set of words cognate with one another, quite unaffected by the script. Word families could exist whether there were writing systems or not. A *xiesheng* series is, of course, exclusively a phenomenon of the writing system. That word families can sometimes be identified by means of a *xiesheng* series is just a coincidence—a by-product.¹⁴⁵

Boltz's and Schuessler's words emphasise the fact that word families do not bear a necessary relation to a *xiesheng* series. Vice versa, *xiesheng* series do not necessarily suggest a word family. Although a series of phonetic compounds are always homonyms, they may

¹⁴⁴ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, pp. 9–11.

¹⁴⁵ William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 99.

have different etymological origins. In other words, the research on cognate words should transcend the limitations of the graphic forms of the characters.

The establishment of a word family must take into account both phonological and semantic factors. Wang Li stresses that cognate words must exhibit similarity in sound and meaning, similarity in sound with identical meaning, or similarity in meaning with identical sound.¹⁴⁶ Besides semantic relationships, cognate words should also share phonetic connections in both initial and rhyme. However, not all words with similar pronunciation and meaning belong to the same word family, as accidental resemblances should be excluded.¹⁴⁷ Jiang Shaoyu suggests that the scope of a word family encompasses more words than those included in cognate words. The relationships between sound and meaning within a word family are generally looser compared to those within cognate words. The research conducted by Qing scholars tends to focus more on word families.¹⁴⁸

Beginning in the late 19th-Century, modern linguistics of the Western tradition renewed the traditional approach to word families by introducing the notion that affixes underlie morphological alternations.¹⁴⁹ The integration of Western linguistics with traditional Chinese philology since the 20th-Century has introduced Western linguistic techniques such as phonetic notation and the concept of affixation. Karlgren laid some of the groundwork for using internal reconstruction techniques to reconstruct the morphology of Old Chinese in his ‘Word Families in Chinese’, in which he grouped together words that were similar in sound and meaning as a preliminary step to identifying roots and morphological processes.¹⁵⁰

However, he did not include affixes in different types of morphological alternation in word

¹⁴⁶ Wang Li 王力 (1900–1986), *Tongyuan zidian* 同源字典 [Etymological Dictionary] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ Laurent Sagart, ‘Word Families’, *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, p. 576.

¹⁴⁸ Jiang Shaoyu, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁹ Laurent Sagart, ‘Word Families’, *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, p. 578.

¹⁵⁰ William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 4.

families.

James A. Matisoff defines a word family as a set of etymologically related words, ultimately derived from the same root, found within a language or across languages.¹⁵¹ According to Baxter and Sagart, if two Old Chinese words share the same root and have different affixes, they can be said to belong to the same word family.¹⁵² In other words, words with the same root but different affixes form a word family. The root acts as a link in sound and meaning between cognate words. Modern research in Old Chinese morphology reflects the morphological derivation and grammatical functions of the affixes, which have been taken into account in the formation of word families.

2.4 Ancient Chinese Studies on Sound-meaning Relations

How have Chinese scholars examined the relationship between sound and meaning? In other words, what is the nature of Chinese debates on this topic during the last two thousand years? Scholars before the Han dynasty already had a vague notion of the relationship between sound and meaning, and that this presents in their application of sound gloss. However, Chinese philology experienced a period of decline during the Song and Ming dynasties, but it was revitalised during the Qing dynasty. The materials that have been gathered in this part of the dissertation support a completely different narrative. In what follows, I give a brief introduction to the study of sound-meaning relations in different eras of Chinese history. This section is intended to document the ways in which traditional Chinese scholars have sought the meaning of a word through its sound, thereby making significant academic progress in this field.

¹⁵¹ Zev Handel, ‘A Brief Response to Fellner and Hill’s “Word Families, allofams, and the Comparative Method”’, *East Asian Languages and Linguistics* vol. 48 (2019): 126.

¹⁵² William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 59.

2.4.1 Sound Glosses of Individual Words in Pre-Qin Texts

Sound gloss is an exegetical method that examines the relationship between two words in terms of their sounds and meanings.¹⁵³ This method can be traced back to the pre-Qin period (earlier than 220 BCE), in which sound plays an important role in the origin and development of characters. Sound gloss was applied in the texts of pre-Qin classics, such as the *Book of Changes* and the *Analects*. Scholars often used a homonym or near homonym to interpret others.

In addition, pre-Qin philosophers emphasised ‘correcting the use of name’ (*zhengming* 正名), which requires the consistency of name and substance. For instance, in the *Analects* 13.3, Confucius said that ‘what is necessary is to correct the use of name...If a statement is not made in a licit name, it will not be justifiable. If the statement is not justifiable, the goal will not be achieved’.¹⁵⁴ In the Chapter ‘On the Correct Use of Names’ of *Xunzi*, it states: ‘The way of a True King institutes names [is as follows]. Because fixed names keep objects distinguished and because when his Way is practised, his goals are universally understood.’¹⁵⁵ The nature of sound gloss is to seek the reason behind the naming of an object, in other words, to seek the source of the meaning of a word.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Wu Zeshun 吳澤順, *Qing yiqian hanyu yinxun cailiao zhengli yu yanjiu* 清以前漢語音訓材料整理與研究 [Research and Collection of the Materials of Chinese Sound Gloss of the Pre-Qing Dynasties] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2016), p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791–1855), *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 [Correct Meaning of the *Analects*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), pp. 517–521. The original Chinese text is: ‘必也正名乎! ...名不正則言不順, 言不順則事不成。’ Translation quoted from: Wu Guozhen 吳國珍, *A New Annotated English Version of the Analects of Confucius* (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 2015), p. 320.

¹⁵⁵ *Xunzi jijie*, collected notes by Wang Xianqian, p. 414. The original Chinese text is: ‘王者之制名, 名定而實辨, 道行而志通。’ Translation quoted from: *Xunzi*, trans. John Knoblock, vol. III (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 128.

¹⁵⁶ Zhao Keqin 趙克勤 argues that there is no necessary connection between the name and the object since the name of an object is determined by customs. Therefore, the intention of exploring the reason behind the naming of an object is radically wrong. See Zhao Keqin 趙克勤, *Gudai hanyu cihuixue* 古代漢語詞彙學 [Lexicology of Ancient Chinese] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2005), p. 216.

Sound gloss in the pre-Qin period represents the spirit of humanistic ethics which exerted a profound influence on the sound gloss in the Han dynasty. For example, sound gloss can be seen in the sentence ‘*zheng* 政者, *zheng* 正也’¹⁵⁷ (to govern means to act correctly) from the *Analects*.¹⁵⁸ Since 正 /*tjinh/ is the phonetic element of 政 /*tjinh/, the glossing word and the glossed word are homonyms in Old Chinese and semantically related to each other.¹⁵⁹ The same applies to the sentences ‘*ren* 仁者, *ren* 人也’¹⁶⁰ (benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity) and ‘*yi* 義者, *yi* 宜也’¹⁶¹ (righteousness is the accordance of actions with what is right) from the *Doctrine of the Mean*.¹⁶² As 仁 /*njin/ and 人 /*njin/ share the same pronunciation, the two characters are related in meaning. Likewise, 義 /*ngjarh/ and 宜 /*ngjar/ are pronounced the same; thus, they are semantically related.

In the *Book of Changes*, it states: ‘*Qian* 乾, *jian* 健也’¹⁶³ (the trigram *Qian* symbolises vigour) as well as ‘*kun* 坤, *shun* 順也’¹⁶⁴ (the trigram *Kun* symbolises obedience).¹⁶⁵ *Qian* 乾 /*gian/ and *jian* 健 /*gjanh/ are near homonyms, differing only in the medial. 坤 /*khwən/ and 順 /*djənh/ belong to the same rhyme group of *wen* 文 /*-ən/. In *Erya* 爾雅 (Approaching Standard), it states: ‘*Gui zhi weiyan gui ye* 鬼之為言歸也’¹⁶⁶ (ghost is that to which people

¹⁵⁷ Liu Baonan, *Lunyu zhengyi*, p. 505.

¹⁵⁸ Wu Guozhen, *A New Annotated English Version of the Analects of Confucius*, p. 311.

¹⁵⁹ Glossed word refers to the word that is explained. Glossing word refers to the word that does the explanation.

¹⁶⁰ *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 [Correct Meaning of the *Book of Rites*], notes by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, expanded annotations by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 1683.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge (1815–1897), vol. I (Taipei: Nantian shuju youxian gongsi, 1991), p. 405.

¹⁶³ *Zhouyi Zhengyi* 周易正義 [Correct Meaning of the *Book of Changes*], commentary by Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), expanded annotations by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 387.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ *Zhou Yi* 周易 [The Zhou Book of Change], trans. Fu Huisheng 傅惠生 (Changsha: Hunan People’s Publishing House, 2008), p. 467.

¹⁶⁶ *Erya* 爾雅 [Approaching Standard], notes by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), expanded annotations by Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 128.

return upon death). *Gui* 鬼 /*kwjədx/ and *gui* 歸 /*kwjəd/ are homonyms. These are examples of the sound gloss based on sound similarity.

Although the glosses in those ancient texts are not based on an accurate linguistic understanding of the phonetic relationships between words, they provide materials for the studies of etymology as many sound glosses are based on semantic relation and sound similarity.

2.4.2 Sound Glosses and Paronomastic Glosses during the Han Dynasty

Deeply influenced by the pre-Qin period, the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) witnessed the prevalence of sound gloss. Many sound glosses in the Han dynasty followed the ones from the pre-Qin period. The objects of sound gloss in the Han dynasty became broader, including not only the classical texts but also dictionaries and commentaries on pre-Qin texts. In addition, sound gloss became more independent as a method of word glosses with diversified formats.¹⁶⁷ The use of sound gloss by Han scholars reflects the intention of seeking the source of a word via the indicator of its sound. The selection of glossing words during this period also reflects cosmological ideas, such as Yin and Yang and the Five Agents, current in the Han dynasty and constitutes an attempt at ordering the world with the help of words.¹⁶⁸

The application of sound gloss increased from sporadic words in the pre-Qin texts to abundant definitions by Han scholars on different classics, such as *Maozhuan* 毛傳 (Mao's Commentary of Poetry), *Shuowen*, and *Shiming* 釋名 (Explanation of Names). For example, the *Shuowen* states that 'ri 日 /*njit/, shi 實 /*djit/也' (the sun signifies 'full')¹⁶⁹ and 'yue 月

¹⁶⁷ This can be exemplified by the sound glosses applied in the *Shuowen*, which are presented in Chapter Four and Five.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Lackner, 'Two Case Studies in Song-Yuan Exegetical Approaches', *World Philology*, eds. Sheldon Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman, and Ku-ming Kevin Chang, p. 138.

¹⁶⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 305.

/*ngwjat/, *que* 闕 /*khjuat/ 也’ (the moon signifies the waning [moon]).¹⁷⁰ Similar interpretations according to sound similarity can also be found in *Shiming*, such as ‘*shu* 暑 /*sthjagx/, *zhu* 煮 /*tjagx/ 也, *reru zhuwu ye* 熱如煮物也’ (heat means ‘boiling’, as it indicates a high temperature similar to that required for boiling substances) and ‘*tu* 土 /*thagx/, *tu* 吐 /*thagx/ 也, *neng tusheng wanwu ye* 能吐生萬物也’¹⁷¹ (earth means ‘to spit out’, as the earth spews out and produces the myriad entities).

Already in the *Shuowen*, Xu Shen had noticed that the phonetic element bore meaning. Xu marked in some of his interpretations that ‘*cong mou mou, mou yisheng* 从某某, 某亦聲’, that is, ‘the character is composed of X and Y, Y also indicates the sound’. For instance, for the character *jing* 敬, Xu noted: ‘*Jing, jingye. Cong xin jing, jing yisheng.* 敬, 敬也。从心敬, 敬亦聲’,¹⁷² in translation, *jing* 敬 means to respect (*jing* 敬). It is composed of *xin* 心 (heart-mind) and *jing* 敬 (to respect). 敬 also indicates the sound. For the character *shou* 授, Xu noted: ‘*Shou, yuye. Cong shou shou, shou yisheng.* 授, 予也。从手受, 受亦聲’,¹⁷³ in translation, *shou* 授 means to give. The character is composed of *shou* 手 (hand) and *shou* 受 (to receive). 受 also stands for the sound. Xu Shen specifically noted that one of the semantic components of an associative compound, e.g., *jing* 敬 or *shou* 受, also stands for the sound. This indicates that the phonetic elements of some characters may contain etymon.

¹⁷⁰ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 316. Jiang Shaoyu notes that although such sound glosses are not solid from linguistic point of view, the intention to explore the relationship between the glossing words and the glossed words is obvious. See Jiang Shaoyu’s *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ Liu Xi 劉熙, *Shiming* 釋名 [Explanation of Names], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 221, p. 386.

¹⁷² Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 508.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 606. In terms of Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction system, they propose that the suffix /*-s/ has a derivational function which derives verbs of outwardly directed action out of verbs of inwardly directed action or stative verbs. In this example, the suffix /*-s/ changes the inwardly directed verb 受 /*[d]u?/ (to receive) into the outwardly directed verb 授 /*[d]u?-/ (to give, to hand over). Moreover, the suffix /*-s/ is the source of the departing tone of *shòu* 授 in Middle Chinese. See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart’s *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 58.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the categorisation of certain classifiers in the *Shuowen* indicates Xu's awareness of the semantic function of phonetic elements. For example, the three characters *ju* 拘, *gou* 筍, and *gou* 鉤 are all categorised under the classifier *gou* 句.

Shuowen: 句，曲也。从口，丩聲。¹⁷⁴

Gou 句 means 'curved'. It is comprised of *kou* 口 (mouth) with *jiu* 丩 (to intertwine) as its phonetic.

Shuowen: 拘，止也。从手句，句亦聲。¹⁷⁵

Ju 拘 means 'to restrain'. It is comprised of *shou* 手 (hand) and *gou* 句 (curved). 句 also denotes the sound.

Shuowen: 筍，曲竹捕魚筍也。从竹句，句亦聲。¹⁷⁶

Gou 筍 is a bent bamboo basket used for catching fish. It is comprised of *zhu* 竹 (bamboo) and *gou* 句 (curved). 句 also denotes the sound.

Shuowen: 鉤，曲鉤也。从金句，句亦聲。¹⁷⁷

Gou 鉤 is the word for 'hook'. It is comprised of *jin* 金 (metal) and *gou* 句 (curved). 句 also denotes the sound.

Xu Shen intentionally classified the characters 拘, 筍, and 鉤 under the classifier 句 instead of the respective classifiers 'shou 手' (hand), 'zhu 竹' (bamboo), and 'jin 金' (metal). This indicates that they are all related to the notion of 'curved', which is conveyed by 句 as their shared phonetic element. However, the *Shuowen* is explicitly a dictionary of graphs, not words; it often describes a graph, which is not the same as an etymological explanation.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, the aforementioned example is not common in the *Shuowen*.

Han scholars often applied sound glosses in their interpretations of ancient texts. The following are some of the examples: In *Shijing maozhuan* 詩經毛傳 (Mao's Commentary of Poetry), it says: 'Fu 敷, bu 布也' (to spread means to extend over);¹⁷⁹ 'zeng 贈, zeng 增也'

¹⁷⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 88.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ *Maoshi Zhengyi* 毛詩正義 [Correct Meaning of *Mao's Commentary of Poetry*], commented by Mao Heng 毛亨 (last years of the Warring States period-first years of the Western Han dynasty),

(to give present means to increase).¹⁸⁰ In *Baihutong* 白虎通 (Discussions from the White Tiger Hall), it says: ‘*Zhi* 智者, *zhi* 知也’ (wisdom means being knowledgeable).¹⁸¹ 贈 and 增 as well as 智 and 知 function as pairs of homonyms in Old Chinese because they share the same phonetic element. The sound gloss comprising of 敷 /*phjag/ and 布 /*pagh/ is also based on sound identification.

The same applies to Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127–200) annotations to classical texts.

For example, for the sentence from the *Book of Rites*, ‘*Quli* 曲禮’:

分爭辨訟, 非禮不決。

To distinguish [between right and wrong] in quarrels, and to discern [right from wrong] in debates, without propriety, a fair resolution cannot be achieved.¹⁸²

Zheng Xuan commented: ‘*Fen, bian, jiebie ye* 分, 辨, 皆別也’ meaning that both *fen* 分 (to distinguish) and *bian* 辨 (to discern) signify ‘to differentiate’ (*bie* 別).¹⁸³ 分 /*pjən/, 辨 /*brianh/, and 別 /*bjiat/ have similar initial consonants, which are bilabial sounds. Therefore, ‘*fen, bian, jiebie ye* 分, 辨, 皆別也’ is a sound gloss based on alliterative syllables.

In the poem ‘Great Drought’ from the *Book of Poetry*:

靡神不舉, 靡愛斯牲。圭璧既卒, 寧莫我聽!

There is no deity to whom we have not made offerings. There is no sacrifice we have not been willing to make. We have burned all our precious jade. Then why are our prayers not answered?

Zheng Xuan noted: ‘*Mi, mo, jiewu ye* 靡, 莫, 皆無也’ meaning that both *mi* 靡 and *mo* 莫 indicate ‘not’ (*wu* 無).¹⁸⁴ 靡 /*mjiarx/, 莫 /*mak/, and 無 /*mjag/ share the same initial

annotations by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), expanded annotations by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648), (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 862.

¹⁸⁰ *Maoshi zhengyi*, p. 1431.

¹⁸¹ Ban Gu 班固, *Baihutong* 白虎通 [Discussions from the White Tiger Hall], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 850, p. 52.

¹⁸² *Qunshu zhiyao* 360 群書治要三六零 [360 Passages Excerpted from the Governing Principles of Ancient China], trans. English Translation Group from Malaysian Han Studies, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Buddhist Education Foundation Ltd., 2018), p. 272.

¹⁸³ *Liji zhengyi*, p. 17.

¹⁸⁴ *Maoshi zhengyi*, p. 1403.

consonant /*m-/. Therefore, ‘*mi, mo, jiewu ye* 靡, 莫, 皆無也’ also displays a sound gloss based on alliterative syllables.

From the above examples, it is evident that Han scholars regularly used a homonym or near homonym to interpret the target word. Sound glosses were extensively applied by Han scholars and represent the argumentative purposes in philosophy and exegesis of the classical texts.

However, some of the sound glosses in Han texts such as *Shiming* and the *Shuowen* are arbitrary to some extent. They are essentially paronomastic glosses as they lack rigorous linguistic evidence. They are more like quasi-etymological puns in which one word is glossed by another, which was assumed to have an etymological connection. Such an etymological link, presumed by Han scholars, is based on phonetic similarity due to a vague sense of language. From a modern linguistic point of view, many of the etymological relationships suggested in the paronomastic glosses are semantically unclear. Some sound glosses in the *Shuowen* seem subjective, as Xu Shen might infuse his own philosophical ideas into the explanations of some characters.¹⁸⁵

For instance, Xu Shen noted that ‘*ma* 馬 (horse) is related in sound and meaning to *nu* 怒 (fury, vigorous) as well as to *wu* 武 (martial prowess).’¹⁸⁶ There is actually no obvious semantic relationship between 馬, 怒, and 武. It is Xu’s subjective assumption.¹⁸⁷ In some sound glosses, as illustrated in the following two examples, Xu incorporated cosmological concepts of Yin and Yang (*yinyang* 陰陽) and the Five Agents (*wuxing* 五行).

¹⁸⁵ Xu Shen did not compile the *Shuowen* purely for linguistic or philological purposes but saw the script as the prerequisite for successful government. See William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, pp. 150–151.

¹⁸⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 465.

¹⁸⁷ Jiang Shaoyu proposes that there were two reasons for the arbitrariness of sound gloss in the Han dynasty. One is ignorance of the fact that the naming of an object is often arbitrary. The other is that the exploration of the relationship between sound and meaning is isolated rather than systematic. See Jiang Shaoyu’s *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 164.

For example:

Shuowen: 卯，冒也。二月，萬物冒地而出。象開門之形。故二月爲天門。¹⁸⁸

The character *mao* 卯 (the Fourth Earthly Branch) means ‘to sprout’ (*mao* 冒). In the second month, all things sprout from the earth.¹⁸⁹ 卯 resembles the shape of opening a door, hence, the second month is referred to as ‘heaven’s gate’.

Shuowen: 未，味也。六月，滋味也。五行，木老於未。象木重枝葉也。¹⁹⁰

The character *wei* 未 (the Eighth Earthly Branch) means ‘flavour’ (*wei* 味). It represents the sixth month, when all things grow and flourish, imbued with vitality. Among the Five Agents, wood ages during the ‘Wei’ stage, symbolising the lush branches and leaves of trees.

Sound glosses from the pre-Qin period and Han dynasty can be classified into several types. Some glosses have no linguistic value as they are far-fetched and contain political intentions, particularly, they reflect the political ideology of Confucianism. For example, in *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 (Heavy Dew of Spring and Autumn), *jun* 君 /*kwjən/ (ruler) is explained as *yuan* 元 /*ngwjən/ (head), *yuan* 原 /*ngwjən/ (origin), *quan* 權 /*gwjən/ (power), *wen* 溫 /*wən/ (gentle), and *qun* 群 (crowd).¹⁹¹ Although these glossing words have similar pronunciations to the glossed word 君, they have no lexical relationship to 君. From this example, we can see how the idea of Confucianism is embedded in the explanation of 君, being a ruler who should possess the quality of being gentle and set the exemplar for his people. There are other types of glosses which have exegetical value. Some glosses reflect the relationship between words in different dialects; some glosses are used to clarify phonetic borrowing; some glosses attempt to seek the source of the naming of an object.¹⁹²

Some paronomastic glosses appeared in pre-Han texts and became a philosophical verity

¹⁸⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 752.

¹⁸⁹ Duan annotated that ‘the Yang energy begins to emerge from the ground’ (*yangqi zhishi shi chudi* 陽氣至是始出地).

¹⁹⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 753.

¹⁹¹ Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–ca.104 BCE), *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 [Heavy Dew of Spring and Autumn], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 181, p. 761.

¹⁹² Zhao Zhenduo 趙振鐸, *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi* 中國語言學史 [History of Chinese Philology] (Beijing : Shangwu yinshuguan, 2017), pp. 122–5.

which was followed by Han scholars and even repeated by Tang scholars. Nevertheless, Han paronomastic glosses from texts have been used as a basis for phonological reconstructions in several recent and forthcoming studies.¹⁹³ Whether or not such glosses are relevant to the actual etymologies of the words, they are at least valuable evidence about the Han-period pronunciation of the words.¹⁹⁴ Although some sound glosses seem arbitrary, as they often reflect the philosophical and political ideas of Han scholars, they provide clues for cognate word studies.

2.4.3 Exegesis of Ancient Chinese Texts during the Tang Dynasty

Since Buddhism was introduced to China during the Eastern Han dynasty, the Sanskrit language had exerted a profound influence on the development of Chinese phonology.¹⁹⁵ The translation of Buddhist sutras spurred the study of Sanskrit by Chinese monks, which benefited the development of analytical skills in Chinese phonology from the Eastern Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty. Exposure to Sanskrit and its linguistics system for several centuries increased awareness among Chinese scholars of the phonological features of the Chinese language. The alphabetical writing system and precise phonetic analysis of Sanskrit led to the refinement of Chinese phonological techniques. The first consequence was the invention of the *fanqie* 反切 method of spelling, which came into general use by the 4th-Century CE.¹⁹⁶ Applying this method of phonetic system, Sui scholar Lu Fayan 陸法言

¹⁹³ W. South Coblin, *A Handbook of Eastern Han Sound Glosses* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1983), pp. 6–15.

¹⁹⁴ William H. Baxter, ‘Reviewed Work: A Handbook of Eastern Han Sound Glosses by W. South Coblin, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* vol. 48, 1 (1985): 170.

¹⁹⁵ Chu Chia-ning 竺家寧, *Shengyunxue zhilü* 聲韻學之旅 [An Exploration of Phonology] (Taipei: Wunan tushu chuban gongsi, 2015), pp. 84–93.

¹⁹⁶ Mair Victor H. and Mei Tsu-lin, ‘The Sanskrit Origins of Recent Style Prosody’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51, no. 2 (1991): 392.

(b.562) compiled a rhyming dictionary *Qieyun* 切韻 (Segmenting Rhymes), in which he noted pronunciations of Chinese characters by *fanqie*. In addition, the four tones (used to differentiate the meaning of Chinese words) were being recognised under Buddhist influence during the second half of the 5th-Century CE.¹⁹⁷

An important book to be mentioned here is *Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義 (All Pronunciations and Meanings of the Sutras), compiled by Master Shi Huilin 釋慧琳 (737–820). This work provides exegetical commentary on certain words in the Buddhist scriptures using phonology and exegesis with reference to philological aids, such as the *Shuowen* and *Erya*. Chinese monks also paid attention to phonology and exegesis. Translators used elements of the spoken language in their translation of the Buddhist scriptures. Spoken language changes with time and place and can lead to difficulties in reading. In order to make up for this deficit, Master Huilin's *Yiqiejing yinyi* provides sounds and meanings for perplexing and unusual words in the Buddhist scriptures, especially for certain freely translated words and transliterated words from Sanskrit. *Yiqiejing yinyi* serves as an important philological dictionary for interpreting the Buddhist scriptures.

In the Tang dynasty, sound glosses found their primary application in commentaries and annotations of ancient texts. Scholars such as Lu Deming 陸德明 (550–630) and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) continued the tradition of sound glosses from Han scholars, employing them to interpret words in ancient texts. For instance, under the sentence '*xian: heng, lizhen, qunü ji* 咸: 亨, 利貞, 取女吉' (The Hexagram *Xian* implies that the future is smooth. It is appropriate to adhere to the correct path. Marrying a young girl brings good fortune), Lu Deming quoted the *Tuan* commentary (*tuanci* 象辭), noting: '*Xian* 咸, *gan* 感

¹⁹⁷ Chen Yinque 陳寅恪 (1890–1969), '*Sisheng sanwen* 四聲三問' [The Four Questions about the Four Tones], *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報 (1934): 275–287.

也’,¹⁹⁸ in translation, the *Xian* (咸) hexagram signifies responsiveness (感). As 咸 serves as the phonetic element of 感, it can be noted that 咸 /*grəm/ and 感 /*kəmɣ/ are near homonyms in Old Chinese. The *Xian* hexagram indicates that sincerity can invoke positive responses.

However, during the Tang through Song dynasties, scholars made arbitrary changes to classics based solely on rhyming criteria, overlooking potential pronunciation changes over time.¹⁹⁹ Zhu Xi and his followers, for example, were unable to explain why certain words in the *Book of Poetry* and other classical texts no longer rhymed in the expected places. They emphasised the notion of ‘rhyming pronunciation’ (*xieyun* 叶韻), whereby they emended the rhymes of the *Book of Poetry* where the words no longer rhymed.²⁰⁰

2.4.4 The *Youwen* Theory Proposed during the Song Dynasty

While Han scholars focused on individual characters, Song scholars shifted attention to character groups. Research on sound glosses was initiated by Song scholar Wang Shengmei 王聖美 (fl.1076), who observed that phonetic elements often contribute to the meaning of phonetic compounds. Wang’s proposal became known by later scholars as the ‘*youwen* theory’, which is an explanation through reference to the right-hand side of the phonetic compound. The *youwen* theory marks a significant development in seeking the origins of phonetic compounds and in discovering the semantic function of phonetic elements.

Shen Kuo’s 沈括 (1030–1094) work, *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談 (Notes Taken at Mengxi), recorded Wang Shengmei’s proposal that the meaning of a phonetic compound is primarily contained in its right-hand side graphic element (i.e., the phonetic element). According to

¹⁹⁸ *Zhouyi zhengyi*, p.163.

¹⁹⁹ Chen Xinxiong 陳新雄, *Shengyunxue* 聲韻學 [Historical Phonology] (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 2005), pp. 635–636.

²⁰⁰ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, pp. 213–215.

Wang, a character's meaning is essentially determined by the right part, while the left part serves to illustrate the classifier. For example, characters belonging to the category of 'water' have the classifier 'shui 水' (water) on the left. As for the right-hand side, the character *jian* 𣎵 denotes 'smallness'. Therefore, small water is called *qian* 淺 (shallow); small metal is called *qian* 錢 (coins); small shells are called *jian* 賤 (cheap), and so forth. These phonetic compounds are cognate with *jian* 𣎵, their shared phonetic element on the right.²⁰¹ The term 'youwen' refers to the phonetic element typically found on the right-hand side of a compound, although it can be located in any part of a phonetic compound. Whichever part it might be, the *youwen* theory posits that the origin of a phonetic compound often lies in its phonetic element.

The concept of the *youwen* theory originated with Yang Quan 楊泉 (fl.280), a scholar from the Western Jin dynasty, who emphasised in his *Wuli lun* 物理論 (Discussions on the Laws of Things) that 'hard metal is called '*jian* 鑿' (firm); strong plants are called '*jin* 緊' (resilient); worthy people are called '*xian* 賢' (virtuous).²⁰² The fundamental meaning and sound of the phonetic element give rise to these three distinct phonetic compounds. Similar notions are found in the *zimu* theory 字母說 (The Theory of Character Origins) by Wang Guanguo 王觀國 (fl.1140).²⁰³ In his *Xuelin* 學林 (The Forest of Learning), Wang cited the example that *lu* 盧 (vessel) is the so-called *zimu*. When the classifier '*jin* 金' (metal) is added, it becomes '*lu* 鑪' (furnace); when the classifier '*huo* 火' (fire) is added, it becomes '*lu* 爐' (stove); when the classifier '*wa* 瓦' (tile) is added, it becomes '*lu* 甌' (a kind of drinking vessel); when the classifier '*hei* 黑' (black) is added, it becomes '*lu* 黚' (black colour, vessel).

²⁰¹ Shen Kuo 沈括 (1030–1094), *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談 [Notes Taken at Mengxi], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 862, p. 790.

²⁰² Li Fang, *Taiping yulan*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 896, p. 633.

²⁰³ Here *zimu* 字母 actually means *zi zhi mu* 字之母, referring to the source character from which later derived characters originate, namely, the phonetic radical.

Classifiers can be omitted as *zimu* 盧 conveys the essential meaning.²⁰⁴ The term *zimu* refers to the phonetic element. Wang's *zimu* theory underlines the derivation of phonetic compounds. In other words, the derivation of many phonetic compounds occurs due to the method of attaching classifiers to phonetic elements.

The *youwen* theory inspired later scholars in cognate word studies, although Song scholars could only provide one or two examples of the semantic function of phonetic elements, indicating a lack of systematic explanation. Moreover, the *youwen* theory focuses on the graphic form of a phonetic element, thus failing to acknowledge the significance of sound, where its origin truly lies. When it comes to the phonetic borrowing of a phonetic element, it is the sound of the character that should be determined to establish the source of meaning. In addition, not every phonetic element conveys meaning, and the meaning contained in the phonetic element may not apply to all the related phonetic compounds. Wang Li notes that characters with different phonetic elements may also be semantically related. Word family research should transcend the limitations of graphic form and explore the etymological links through sound and meaning.²⁰⁵

The method of 'exploring a word's meaning through its sound' (*yinsheng qiuyi* 因聲求義) was initially proposed by Dai Tong 戴侗 (1200–1285) in the late Song dynasty. In his *Liushu gu* 六書故 (Ancient Forms of the Six Principles of Character Formation), he included the following comments:

訓詁之士，知因文以求義矣，未知因聲以求義也。夫文字之用，莫博於諧聲，莫變於假借，因文以求義而不知因聲以求義，吾未見其能盡文字之情也。²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Wang Guanguo 王觀國 (fl.1140), *Xuelin* 學林 [The Forest of Learning], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 851, p. 135.

²⁰⁵ Wang Li wenji 王力文集 [The Collected Works of Wang Li], vol. 9 (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988), p. 704.

²⁰⁶ Dai Tong 戴侗 (1200–1285), *Liushu gu* 六書故 [Ancient Forms of the Six Principles of Character Formation], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 226, p. 4. Translation quoted from: Wolfgang Behr, 'Some Ideas on

The gentlemen engage in glosses indeed know how to come up with a meaning on the basis of the written, but they still do not know how to come up with a meaning on the basis of a sound. Now, among the functions of writing, there is nothing broader than the phonophoric principle, nothing more flexible than phonetic loans. Since they come up with meanings on the basis of the written words but ignore how to come up with a meaning on the basis of sound, I fail to see how they are able to fully grasp the intrinsic properties of writing.

The method of *yinsheng qiuyi* encompasses various aspects, including sound gloss, the *youwen* theory, cognate words, phonetic borrowing, etc. It was widely applied by later scholars.

Wang Anshi's 王安石 (1021–1086) *Zishuo* 字說 (Explanation of Characters) was highly influential in Song philological research. Wang applied the principle of constructing 'associative compound' (*huiyi* 會意) as pivotal in textual analysis. He argued against Xu Shen's phonological derivations, considering them arbitrary and unnecessary for understanding the meaning of a character. Wang emphasised analysing all the components within a complex character to determine the precise meaning of the whole. His structural approach relied on personal observation and inference from the composition of the characters themselves. Overlooking the fact that the sound component contributes to the source of meaning, he often analysed the structure of the characters to come up with plausible etymologies. The speculative conclusions of Song scholars such as Wang Anshi were later rejected by Qing philologists, who recognised that a character's phonetic element was the decisive element to establish meaning.²⁰⁷

2.4.5 The Achievements of Scholars during the Qing Dynasty

Since the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) was ruled by the Mongolian ethnic minority, and the academic focus of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) emphasised the philosophy of the mind,

the Origin of Language in Late Imperial China', p. 5.

²⁰⁷ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, pp. 214–217.

Chinese philology did not experience significant progress until the Qing dynasty. The Qing scholars surpassed the achievements of previous scholars, marking a golden period in philological studies. However, two scholars from the Ming dynasty deserving mention here are Chen Di 陳第 (1541–1617) and Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682). Chen Di proposed the idea that, ‘Times change, as do places; characters undergo reform, and pronunciations shift. This is bound to happen.’²⁰⁸ He started to establish a historical perspective on the corresponding changes in phonetic evolution. Gu Yanwu was the first to establish ancient rhyme groups, which served as the basis for subsequent research on Old Chinese phonology by scholars of the Qing dynasty.

Different from Song scholars such as Wang Anshi, Qing scholars argued that rules for compound ideographs had a very limited contribution to the formation of Chinese characters. The overwhelming majority of characters had been composed based on phonetic rules rather than ideographic combinations. Qing scholars gradually developed a sophisticated notion of how the phonetic elements operated in the formation of compound characters.²⁰⁹ They, therefore, advanced significantly beyond their predecessors in terms of studies of historical phonology.

Qing philologists tried to explore the etymological links between a family of words. Dai Zhen put forward that ‘when doubtful about the meaning, seek it through sound; when doubtful about the sound, verify it through meaning’ (*Yiyu yizhe, yisheng qiuzhi. Yiyu shengzhe, yiyi zhengzhi* 疑於義者，以聲求之。疑於聲者，以義正之).²¹⁰ In other words,

²⁰⁸ Chen Di 陳第(1541–1617), *Maoshi guyin kao* 毛詩古音考 [Examination of Old Chinese Sound in *Mao's Commentary on the Book of Poetry*], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 239, p. 407. The original Chinese text is: ‘時有古今，地有南北，字有更革，音有轉移，亦勢所必至。’

²⁰⁹ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, pp. 217–218.

²¹⁰ Dai Zhen 戴震, ‘*Zhuanyu ershi zhang xu* 轉語二十章序’ [Preface to Twenty Chapters on Phonetic Alternation of Words] in *Dai Zhen wenji* 戴震文集 [Collected Articles of Dai Zhen], punctuated and collated by Zhao Yuxin 趙玉新 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), p. 92.

the coordination of sound and meaning can serve as supporting evidence in word glosses. Duan Yucai, a student of Dai Zhen, followed his teacher's idea and developed it further. He stressed that in the case of the classics, nothing is more essential than understanding the meaning of individual graphs. With regard to comprehending meaning, nothing is more important than knowing the sound.²¹¹ In the *Duanzhu*, Duan clarified the derivation of words and illustrated the semantic link between words through the indicator of sound and came up with many insightful ideas. He emphasised the interrelationship between form, sound, and meaning. Duan's contribution lies mainly in the connection that he established between palaeography, phonology, and exegesis, as well as his skilful application of historical phonology to exegesis.

In his *Guangya shuzheng*, Wang Niansun put forward that 'ancient meanings are disclosed through ancient phonology without attachment to graphic form'.²¹² He used corroborative materials from the ancient texts to verify his commentaries. Wang also collected words whose meanings are related to 'big or great' and categorised them according to their initials. He did so in his article '*Shida* 釋大' (Interpreting Bigness), which is considered to be a prototype of a dictionary of cognate words. Wang Yinzhi 王引之 (1766–1834), Wang Niansun's son and successor, wrote *Jingyi shuwen* 經義述聞 (Interpretations of the Classics Heard from My Father) and *Jingzhuan shici* 經傳釋詞 (Explanation of the Function Words in the Classics and Commentaries), in which he pursued to the letter his father's idea of 'disclosing ancient meaning through ancient sound'.

Huang Chengji 黃承吉 (1771–1842) provided further elaboration on the *youwen* theory from the perspective of character derivation in his work '*Ziyi qiyu youpang zhisheng shuo* 字

²¹¹ Wang Niansun 王念孫, *Guangya shuzheng* 廣雅疏證 [Exegetical Evidence for *Expanding Standard*], punctuated and collated by Zhang Qiyun 張其昀 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019), p. 1.

²¹² *Ibid*, p. 2.

義起於右旁之聲說’ (Meaning Derives from the Sound of the Right-hand Side Phonetic

Element of a Phonetic Compound). He notes:

凡字皆起於聲，任舉一字，聞其聲即已通知其義。是以古書凡同聲之字，但舉其右旁之網之聲，不必拘於左旁之目之跡，而皆可通用，並有不必舉其右旁為聲之本字，而任舉其同聲之字，即可用為同義者。蓋凡字之同聲者，皆為同義，聲在是，則義在是，是以義起於聲。²¹³

Written words arise from spoken words. For any given character, upon hearing its sound, its meaning is already conveyed. Therefore, in ancient texts, phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element can be interchangeably used, regardless of the graphic form of their classifiers. Additionally, characters with the same sound can be used interchangeably to represent the same meaning. In other words, characters with the same sound bear the same meaning, as meaning originates from sound.

From the pre-Qin period to the Qing dynasty, the study of sound-meaning relations became increasingly theoretical, explicit, and comprehensive. Considering that the Qing dynasty is the golden period in the development of Chinese philology, how did this period lead to innovations in the field of Chinese philology? What impact did scholars such as Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, and Wang Niansun have on Qing scholarship? These questions will be addressed in the following chapter.

²¹³ Huang Sheng 黃生 and Huang Chengji 黃承吉 (1771–1842), *Zigu yifu he'an* 字詁義府合按 [Notes on the Explanation of Characters and Interpretation of Classics] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), p. 75.

Chapter Three: Duan Yucai and his Contemporaries

As my dissertation deals with Duan Yucai as a historical figure, this chapter aims to contextualise Duan and his work, the *Duanzhu*, against the background of the advances in scholarship in the 18th-Century. What did Duan contribute to Chinese philology? What were his innovations that made his research a milestone in the historical development of Chinese philology? How did he influence the later study of Chinese historical phonology and exegesis? How did he relate to other contemporary intellectuals who also dealt with exegesis but with slightly different approaches? What were the shortcomings in Duan's work? This chapter compares and relates Duan Yucai with Dai Zhen, Wang Niansun, and other Qing dynasty *Shuowen* specialists. It attempts to clarify the debt Duan Yucai owed to his mentor Dai Zhen, and to analyse the similarities and differences between Duan Yucai's and Wang Niansun's approaches. The aim is to evaluate Duan in the context of the intellectual developments in Qing China.

3.1 The Qing Scholars' Breakthrough in Philology

3.1.1 Pre-Qing Investigations into Historical Phonology

Early in the pre-Qin period, 'seeking meaning through sound' emerged as an important method of exegesis, exemplified by sound glosses like the one found in the *Analects*: 'Zheng 政 /*tjinh/者, zheng 正 /*tjinh/也' (to govern means to act correctly).²¹⁴ During the Han dynasty, scholars such as Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53–ca.18 BCE), Xu Shen, and Liu Xi 劉熙

²¹⁴ Liu Baonan, *Lunyu zhengyi*, p. 505. The original Chinese text is: '季康子問政於孔子。孔子對曰：政者，正也。子帥以正，孰敢不正？' (When Jikangzi asked Confucius about government, Confucius said, 'To govern means to act rightly. If you take the lead on the right way, who else dares to go astray?') Wu Guozhen, *A New Annotated English Version of the Analects of Confucius*, p. 311. Further details, see in Chapter 2.4.1.

(fl.196 CE) recognised the importance of sound in exploring meaning, as is evident in texts such as *Fangyan* 方言 (Dialects), *Shuowen*, and *Shiming*.²¹⁵ However, some sound glosses were subjectively interpreted due to a lack of linguistic evidence, making them seem far-fetched from a modern perspective.²¹⁶ During the Song dynasty, the *youwen* theory proposed that a character's meaning is determined by its phonetic element, which is always on the right-hand side of the character. Although it surpassed sound gloss in terms of etymological studies, it solely emphasised the graphic form of the phonetic element, failing to overcome the limitation of the character's form. As a result, the pursuit of semantics from phonetics could not be fully realised, as the exploration for meaning hidden in sound may be hindered by the visual representation of graphic form. For a considerable period, the connection between sound and meaning remained elusive due to the absence of systematic theoretical elaboration on their relationship. It was not until the Qing dynasty that scholars comprehensively and systematically elucidated the relationship between sound and meaning. Qing scholars made significant breakthroughs in historical phonology. As a result, the approach of *yinsheng qiuyi* 因聲求義 (seek meaning through sound) was theoretically established and widely adopted. Scholars such as Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, and Wang Niansun used this approach to address exegetical issues, including tracing etymology, discerning cognate words, recognising phonetic borrowings, and identifying polysyllabic morphemes (*lianmian ci* 聯綿詞).

The Qing scholars were not the first to propose a relationship between ancient sound and ancient meaning. In the late Song dynasty, Dai Tong 戴侗 (1200–1285) proposed the method of 'exploring the meaning of a word through its sound' in his *Ancient Forms of the Six*

²¹⁵ *Fangyan* 方言 (Dialects) is an ancient exegetical dictionary authored by the Western Han scholar Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53–ca.18 BCE).

²¹⁶ For example, in the *Shuowen*, the character *mu* 木 /*muk/ (wood) is explained as 'to emit' (*mao* 冒 /*mægwh/). The semantic connection between 木 and 冒 is not obvious, and such sound gloss lacks rigorous linguistic evidence. Further details, see paronomastic glosses discussed in Chapter 2.4.2.

Principles of Character Formation.²¹⁷ In the late Ming dynasty, Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–1671) remarked: ‘To penetrate an ancient meaning, one must first penetrate the ancient sounds’ (*Yutong guyi, xiantong guyin* 欲通古義，先通古音)²¹⁸ and ‘one can understand the meaning through the sound, and knowing the meaning one can get the sound’ (*Yinsheng zhiyi, zhiyi er desheng* 因聲知義，知義而得聲).²¹⁹ Fang’s statement suggests a correspondence between sound and meaning. As homonyms often have similar meanings, sound can provide clues to meaning. Similarly, words that are semantically related also suggest the possibility of their phonetic similarity. These insights underscore the significance of Old Chinese phonology in the study of the Old Chinese language. Both Dai Tong and Fang Yizhi already recognised the importance of Old Chinese phonology. Why did it take another century until the philological breakthrough occurred that is associated with the names of Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, and Wang Niansun? I will argue that the primary reason is the lack of a clear understanding of the historical evolution of Chinese phonology. Additionally, earlier scholars did not develop their insights into a fully-fledged systematic analysis of Old Chinese phonology, possibly due to limited understanding of phonetic changes over time. For instance, Song scholars could not explain why certain words in the *Book of Poetry* no longer rhymed in the expected places and thus made arbitrary changes to the classics based solely on rhyming criteria.²²⁰ It was not until the Qing dynasty that historical phonology received significant attention and gradually developed into an academic discipline. During this period, scholars such as Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, and Wang Niansun made substantial contributions to the systematic analysis and understanding of Old Chinese phonology.

²¹⁷ Dai Tong, *Liushu gu*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 226, p. 4.

²¹⁸ Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–1671), *Tongya* 通雅 [Extensive Standard], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 857, p. 21.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 166.

²²⁰ Chu Chia-ning 竺家寧, *Shengyunxue* 聲韻學 [Chinese Phonology] (Taizhong: Wunan tushu chuban gongsi, 2020), pp. 468-70.

3.1.2 Development of the Study of Old Chinese Phonology

The achievements of Old Chinese phonology in the Qing dynasty are remarkable, as they not only stimulated significant advances in the study of phonology but also promoted the development of graphology and exegesis. The study of philology in the *Qian-Jia* 乾嘉 period (1736–1820) primarily focused on the study of ancient sound and ancient meaning, representing the pinnacle of the academic accomplishment of the *Qian-Jia School*.

Although the Qianlong 乾隆 and Jiaqing 嘉慶 reigns of the Qing period are often combined as *Qian-Jia*, these two periods differ upon detailed analysis. Language study during the Qianlong reign (1736–1795) primarily concerned ancient sounds, while scholarly attention shifted towards ancient glosses during the Jiaqing period (1796–1820). If ancient sounds had not been studied and reconstructed during the Qianlong reign, works on ancient glosses would not have been produced during the Jiaqing reign.²²¹ Progress in the reconstruction of Old Chinese phonology played a crucial role in the development of *Qian-Jia* philology, as historical phonology serves as an essential tool for the study of etymology, lexicology, and exegesis.

The study of ancient rhymes originated with Wu Yu 吳棫 (1100–1154) and Zheng Xiang 鄭庠 (a scholar from the Southern Song dynasty, dates unknown), and was further developed by Gu Yanwu, who created the first scientific phonological system of Old Chinese. Gu established ten groups of ancient rhymes, which served as the foundation for research on Old Chinese phonology during the *Qian-Jia* period. Following Gu, a succession of distinguished scholars refined the set of rhyme groups. Jiang Yong 江永 (1681–1762) divided ancient rhymes into thirteen groups. During the middle of Qianlong reign, Duan Yucai made a

²²¹ He Jiuying 何九盈, 'Qianjia shidai de yuyanxue 乾嘉時代的語言學' [The Philology during the Qian-Jia Period], *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大學學報 1 (1984): 78.

ground-breaking discovery that phonetic compounds were crucial for reconstructing Old Chinese, alongside the rhymes in the *Book of Poetry*. Building on this insight, Duan further divided ancient rhymes into seventeen groups. Following Duan's discovery, scholars such as Dai Zhen, Wang Niansun, and Jiang Yougao expanded the set of rhyme groups based on this new source. Their research findings in historical phonology were instrumental in addressing exegetical problems. Consequently, during the late Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, remarkable works of exegesis were produced, including Duan Yucai's *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, Wang Niansun's *Guangya shuzheng*, Wang Yinzhi's *Jingyi shuwen* and *Jingzhuan shici*.²²² These works represented significant advancements in the understanding of Old Chinese phonology and its application in exegetical studies.

3.1.3 Establishment and Practice of Theories

The full development of Old Chinese phonology during the *Qian-Jia* period is attributed to the unprecedented exploitation of its theoretical significance and practical value. Dai Zhen proposed the idea of 'understanding meaning via sound' (*Yinsheng er zhiyi* 因聲而知義)²²³ and that 'gloss and sound conform to each other' (*Xungu yinsheng, xiangwei biaoli* 訓詁音聲, 相為表裡).²²⁴ The sound Dai referred to is Old Chinese sound. Contemporary scholars such as Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804), as well as Dai's disciples Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun, all concurred with and followed Dai's views. Qian Daxin asserted: 'The perception of meaning cannot be achieved by empty talk about meaning and principles without a solid understanding of sound' (*Shengyin zhi butong, er kongtan yili, wu weijian qi jingyu yi ye* 聲音

²²² He Jiuying, 'Qianjia shidai de yuyanxue', *Beijing daxue xuebao* 1 (1984): 79.

²²³ Dai Zhen 戴震, 'Lun yunshu zhong ziyi da qinshangshu huitian 論韻書中字義答秦尚書蕙田' [Discussing the Meanings of Characters in Rhyme Books, Replying to Official Qin Huitian] in *Dai Zhen wenji*, punctuated and collated by Zhao Yuxin, p. 809.

²²⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 809.

之不通，而空談義理，吾未見其精於義也).²²⁵ Duan Yucai declared in the preface to *Guangya shuzheng* that ‘finding out the correct meaning is crucial when studying ancient texts. Phonetic analysis is crucial to finding out the correct meaning’ (*Zhijing mo zhongyu deyi, deyi mo qieyu deyin* 治經莫重於得義，得義莫切於得音).²²⁶ Wang Niansun stated: ‘The essence of exegesis comes from sound’ (*Xungu zhizhi, benyu shengyin* 訓話之旨，本於聲音).²²⁷ Their statements represent a continuation and development of Dai Zhen’s theory. Unlike their predecessors, Qing scholars seldom relied on arbitrary sound glosses based on subjective assumptions. They transcended the limitations of graphic form and utilised Old Chinese phonology as a tool to analyse and infer the etymological links between words.

3.2 The Impact of Dai Zhen

Dai Zhen, a philosopher, mathematician, and philologist, stood as a pivotal figure in Qing intellectual history.²²⁸ He was the disciple of the phonologist Jiang Yong, the teacher of eminent scholars such as Duan Yucai, Wang Niansun, and Kong Guangsen 孔廣森 (1751–1786), and also a friend of the outstanding scholar Qian Daxin. Dai’s influence reverberated through Qing philological studies and left a lasting impact on subsequent research. He underscored the importance and purpose of philology in the following words:

古人之小學亡，而後有故訓。故訓之法亡，流而為鑿空……嗚乎！經之至者，道也。所以明道者，其詞也。所以成詞者，未有能外小學文字者也。由文字以通乎語言，由語言以通乎聖賢之志，譬之適堂壇之必循其階，而不可以躐等。²²⁹

The philology of the ancients was lost, and after this, there were glossing commentaries. The methods of glossing commentary were lost, and what was thereupon transmitted became fabricated and groundless gibberish...Alas! As for where the classics take us,

²²⁵ Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804), *Qianyantang ji* 潛研堂集 [Collected Works of the Qianyantang] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), p. 386.

²²⁶ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, punctuated and collated by Zhang Qiyun, p. 1.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p. 162.

²²⁹ Dai Zhen 戴震, ‘Yu Shi Zhongming Lunxue shu 與是仲明論學書’ [Discussing Academic Issues with Shi Zhongming] in *Dai Zhen wenji*, punctuated and collated by Zhao Yuxin, p.140.

that is the Way. As for what is used to make the Way clear, it is words. As for what is used to define words, there has never been someone who was able to do this outside of philology and written words. From written words, one can comprehend spoken words; from spoken words, one can comprehend the intent in the hearts of sages and worthies. This is analogous to following the steps to reach the altar in a hall; one must not skip any of the levels.²³⁰

Although the Way is abstract, it finds expression through the concrete written words found in the classics, which embody the ancient language conveyed by the sages. Therefore, mastering the written language is essential to perceiving the Way, as it serves as the carrier of the Way. This is one of the primary purposes of traditional Chinese philological studies. The subsequent account delineates how Dai paved the way for later scholars to develop his theories and methods further.

3.2.1 Dai's Objective and Impartial Research Attitude

There were two distinct schools of scholarship with either of which most *Qian-Jia* scholars identified. One was the Wu school (*wupai* 吳派) represented by Hui Dong 惠棟 (1697–1758).²³¹ Hui Dong and his followers worshiped the authority of Han dynasty classical scholars and insisted that all classical knowledge should follow and expand the ancient authority of Han classical scholarship.²³² According to the Wu school, the scholars of the Han period were not too distant in time from ‘antiquity’. Thus, their philological abilities to penetrate the linguistic aspects of earlier eras were considered to be better than those of later scholars.²³³ The other was the Wan school (*wanpai* 皖派), which is represented by Dai Zhen.²³⁴ Dai and his followers inherited the evidential techniques of Han Learning and applied them with rigorous exactness to the study of phonological changes, etymology,

²³⁰ Translated following Timothy Michael O’Neill with slight modifications. Timothy Michael O’Neill’s *Ideography and Chinese Language Theory*, p. 204.

²³¹ ‘Wu 吳’ refers to *Suzhou* 蘇州, the native city of Hui Dong.

²³² Hu Minghui, *China’s Transition to Modernity: The New Classical Vision of Dai Zhen* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2015), pp. 7–8.

²³³ Ori Sela, *China’s Philological Turn*, p. 67.

²³⁴ ‘Wan 皖’ refers to *Anhui* 安徽, the native province of Dai Zhen.

textual criticism, mathematics, and astronomy. Their scholarly pursuit aimed at verifiable truth rather than merely preserving Han Learning.²³⁵ They aspired to maintain the same rigor and commitment to truth in linguistics as in natural sciences like mathematics and astronomy. However, unlike mathematics and astronomy, which have incontrovertible proofs, language is more complex. This complexity arises because language is influenced by factors such as customs and culture, which can introduce exceptions.

Moreover, Dai's methodology accommodated early modern European science and adopted a more tolerant and inclusive view of 'Western learning'.²³⁶ The Jesuit introduction of European science, such as astronomy and mathematics, to 17th-Century China aroused serious interest among some Qing scholars such as Dai and spilled over into textual criticism. Dai's eclectic erudition and rigorous academic attitude profoundly influenced his students, including Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun. Like their mentor, Duan and Wang eschewed partisanship and focused on the pursuit of truth through meticulous analysis of language used in ancient classics, including graphology, phonology, lexicology, syntax, and contextual meaning. They applied a strict logic and scientific method to word glosses and classical studies.

The Wan school diverged from the Wu school by refraining from uncritically adopting the commentaries of Han scholars. They did not prioritise any interpretive lineage, but instead took into account a broad range of ancient commentaries and dictionaries. Dai Zhen repudiated the Wu school's blind reverence of Han learning and its antiquarian belief: 'That which is ancient must be authentic and that which is of the Han must be good' (*Fangu bizhen, fanhan jiehao* 凡古必真，凡漢皆好).²³⁷ He contended:

²³⁵ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, p. 59.

²³⁶ Hu Minghui, *China's Transition to Modernity: The New Classical Vision of Dai Zhen*, p. 6.

²³⁷ Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), *Qingdai xueshu gailun* 清代學術概論 [Intellectual Trends in

數百年已降，說經之弊，善鑿空而已矣……鑿空之弊有二，其一緣詞生訓也，其一守訛傳謬也。²³⁸

For several centuries, the study of ancient texts has been flawed due to far-fetched interpretations...These defects can be categorised into two aspects: misinterpreting words by taking them too literally without understanding their intended meaning, and perpetuating errors through adherence and transmission.

Although scholars of the Dai school's discussion of philology and artifacts quoted the sayings of Han scholars frequently and extensively, they did not follow them without reservation.²³⁹ Dai Zhen asserted, 'A scholar should be deluded neither by others nor by himself' (*Bu yiren biji, bu yiji zibi* 不以人蔽己，不以己自蔽).²⁴⁰ His commitment to seeking the meaning through philological evidence, without showing partiality towards any commentator, greatly influenced the *Qian-Jia* scholars, especially his leading disciple Duan Yucai.

Although Dai and Duan were only twelve years apart in age, Duan held his teacher Dai in high regard. Even in Duan's seventies, he would demonstrate respect for Dai by standing with his hands folded when speaking of his teacher. As a sign of reverence, Duan would ceremonially read Dai's personal letters on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month.²⁴¹ Such respect is not blind, but is based on the fact that 'in case of disagreement of viewpoints, people argue with one another [so freely] that even students do not hesitate to criticise or

the Qing Period] (Beijing: Renmin University of China Press, 2004), p. 159. Translation quoted from: Liang Chi-chao, *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, translated with introduction and notes by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 53.

²³⁸ Dai Zhen, 'Gu jingjie gouchen xu' in *Dai Zhen wenji*, punctuated and collated by Zhao Yuxin, p. 146.

²³⁹ Liang Qichao, *Qingdai xueshu gailun*, p.170. The original Chinese text is: '雖常博引漢人之說，然並不墨守之。' Translation quoted from: *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, translated with introduction and notes by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, p. 63.

²⁴⁰ Liang Qichao, *Qingdai xueshu gailun*, p.162. Translation quoted from: *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, translated with introduction and notes by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, p. 55.

²⁴¹ Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 (1844–1927), ed. *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 [Draft History of Qing], vol. 43 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), p.13203. The original Chinese text is: '專執弟子禮，雖毫，或稱震，必垂手拱立，朔望必莊誦震手札一通。'

reject their teachers, and the recipient [of criticism] is never offended by it'.²⁴² Duan's respect for Dai truly knew no bounds, but a reading of his *Duanzhu* will reveal expressions like 'the Master's saying is wrong' and 'the Master's saying is incorrect' everywhere.²⁴³ With differing views on some linguistic problems, Duan was not afraid to argue with his master. In academic research, Duan's major phonological discoveries surpassed those of his teacher Dai. Dai appreciated the younger Duan and borrowed a number of ideas from his talented disciple. The master-disciple relationship is valuable because it was based on respect for the truth.

3.2.2 Dai's Insights into the Connection between Sound and Meaning

The pronunciation of a character changes over time, and the meanings of words evolve. How can one master the connection between sound and meaning through these changes and developments? Dai suggested that 'gloss and sound conform to each other' (*Xungu yinsheng, xiangwei biaoli* 訓詁音聲，相為表裡)，²⁴⁴ and 'graphology, glosses, and sound are inseparable' (*Zixue, guxun, yinsheng, shiwei xiangli* 字學、故訓、音聲，始末相離)。²⁴⁵ Dai pointed out that:

字書主於訓詁，韻書主於音聲，然二者恒相因……凡故訓之失傳者，於此亦可因聲而知義矣。²⁴⁶

Character dictionaries primarily concern glosses, while rhyme dictionaries primarily concern pronunciations. However, the two fields are often interrelated... In cases where the ancient glosses of words have been lost, one can also infer their meanings based on pronunciations.

²⁴² Liang Qichao, *Qingdai xueshu gailun*, p.174. The original Chinese text is: '弟子駁難本師，亦所不避，受之者不以為忤。' Translation quoted from: *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, translated with introduction and notes by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, p. 67.

²⁴³ Liang Chi-chao, *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, translated with introduction and notes by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, p. 64.

²⁴⁴ Dai Zhen, '*Liushu yinyunbiao xu* 六書音韻表序' [Preface to the Rhyme Diagram of the Six Principles of Character Formation] in the *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 809.

²⁴⁵ Dai Zhen Research Association, *Dai Zhen quanji* 戴震全集 [The Complete Works of Dai Zhen], vol. 5 (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 1991), p. 2587.

²⁴⁶ Dai Zhen, 'Discussing the Meanings of Characters in Rhyme Books, Replying to Official Qin Huitian' in *Dai Zhen wenji*, punctuated and collated by Zhao Yuxin, p. 48.

Dai clearly recognised the correlation between sound and meaning. His emphasis on exploring the connection between the sound and meaning provided the theoretical foundation for Duan's theory of *shengyi tongyuan*.

3.2.3 Dai's Application of Historical Phonology in Exegesis

Dai was adept at phonological distinction. In his research on historical phonology, Dai separated the *rusheng yun* 入聲韻, a rhyme with a plosive ending (/*-p/, /*-t/, /*-k/), from *yinsheng yun* 陰聲韻, a rhyme with an open ending, and divided the ancient rhymes into twenty-five groups. He adopted Duan's perspective that 'the rhyme *zhi* 支 should be divided into independent rhymes *zhi* 支 /*-ig/, *zhi* 脂 /*-id/, /*-it/, and *zhi* 之 /*-əg/

Dai proposed that 'changes in pronunciation have produced both ancient sounds and modern sounds' (*Yinshi liubian you gujin* 音之流變有古今),²⁴⁷ and asserted that 'modern rhymes should not be mixed with ancient rhymes' (*Bushi jinyin guyin xiangza cheng yiyun* 不使今音古音相雜成一韻).²⁴⁸ The impact of his clear perception of the gap between the ancient times and the present is evident in his disciple Duan's diachronic analysis of the forms, sounds, and meanings of characters. For example, in the *Duanzhu*, Duan emphasised ancient and modern graphs, highlighting their different uses according to different time periods.²⁴⁹ Influenced by his master, Duan was also aware of the sound changes resulting from geographical variations, as evidenced by his quotations from *Dialects* in his word glosses.

In addition, Dai applied his knowledge of historical phonology to exegesis and the revision of ancient texts, resulting in works such as *Fangyan shuzheng* 方言疏證 (Evidential Commentaries on *Dialects*) and *Mao Zheng shi kaozheng* 毛鄭詩考證 (Evidential Research

²⁴⁷ Dai Zhen Research Association, *Dai Zhen quanji*, vol. 5, p. 2516.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2521.

²⁴⁹ Further details, see in Chapter 3.5.4.

on Mao's *Commenatry* and Zheng's *Annotation of the Book of Poetry*). *Evidential Commentaries on Dialects* exemplifies Dai's approach to exploring meaning through sound. He emphasised the importance of investigating phonetic alternation, which results from geographical and temporal variations, behind the graphic form of a character, thereby identifying loan characters and connecting cognate words in his commentaries on Yang Xiong's *Dialects* and Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276–324) annotations. Dai's utilisation of Old Chinese phonology in exegesis facilitated his study of ancient language. Duan Yucai, Wang Niansun, and Wang Yinzhi expanded upon this application, which became one of the defining features of Qing dynasty philology.²⁵⁰

3.2.4 Dai's Use of Broad References as Supporting Evidence

The study of semantics necessitates a systematic approach that is sensitive to historical context. It is crucial to conduct comprehensive research to avoid partial understanding. In his collation and annotations of ancient texts, Dai undertook thorough surveys, gathering relevant information from dictionaries and ancient literature to provide robust supporting evidence. He abstained from determining glosses without ample evidence. In his work *Evidential Commentaries on Dialects*, Dai referenced an extensive array of sources, including the *Shuowen*, *Guangya*, *Erya*, *Shiming*, *Yupian* 玉篇 (Jade Chapters), *Guangyun*, and *Mao's Commentary*.²⁵¹ This exemplifies Dai's rigorous academic approach and exhaustive investigation in philological research. Dai asserted that the meaning of a single character [in a

²⁵⁰ Xu Lingying 徐玲英, 'Lun Dai Zhen dui qingdai jiaikanxue de yinling 論戴震對清代校勘學的引領' [Discussions on Dai Zhen's Leadership in the Qing Dynasty's Collation], *Hunan daxue xuebao* 湖南大學學報 5 (2012): 82.

²⁵¹ Xu Daobin 徐道彬, 'Lun Dai Zhen Fangyan shuzheng de xueshu jiazhi yu diwei 論戴震〈方言疏證〉的學術價值與地位' [Discussions on the Academic Value and Status of Dai Zhen's *Evidential Commentaries on Dialects*], *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 中國典籍與文化 4 (2009): 89–95.

classical text] can be considered as conclusively established only when it is uniformly applicable to all the classics and firmly based on the Six Principles of Character Formation.²⁵²

This was the guiding principle of Dai's systematic study of philology.

Dai's research principle and attitude were inherited by his students Duan and Wang. Lu Wenchao summarised Duan's experience of studying the *Shuowen* as follows: 'In order to conduct evidential research on one classical text, Duan must have a thorough understanding of other classics' (*Butong zhongjing, ze buneng zhi yijing* 不通眾經，則不能治一經).²⁵³ Similarly, Wang asserted that 'no explanation should be made of a sentence if the whole book has not been comprehended, neither of a work of the classics if various other pieces have not been comprehended' (*Butong quanshu, buneng shuo yiju; butong zhujing, yi buneng shuo yijing* 不通全書，不能說一句；不通諸經，亦不能說一經).²⁵⁴ Duan and Wang attributed their rigorous academic attitude to their teacher Dai. As Chen Huan 陳奐 (1786–1863) stated:

段先生曰：余之治《說文》也，以字考經，以經考字，大指本徽郡戴氏。高郵王石臞先生淵源同出乎戴，故論學若合符節。²⁵⁵

Duan once said: 'I study the *Shuowen* by examining classics through characters, while examining characters through classics. I learned this method from Dai.' Wang Niansun's method is also derived from Dai. Duan and Wang share the same academic lineage. Their research corresponds with each other.

Liang Qichao summarised the academic atmosphere during the Qing dynasty that, 'In order to establish the meaning of a word, an interpretation must be based on evidence; that which is not based on evidence but on speculation is rejected without question'; and that, 'An

²⁵² Dai Zhen Research Association, *Dai Zhen quanji*, vol. 5, p. 2587. The original Chinese text is: '一字之義，當貫群經，本六書，然後為定。' Translation quoted from: Yu Yingshi, *Chinese History and Culture: Seventeenth Century through Twentieth Century*, with the editorial assistance of Josephine Chiu-Duke and Michael S. Duke, p. 61.

²⁵³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi dou* 說文解字讀 [Explanation of the *Explaining Simple Graphs and Analysing Compound Characters*] (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1995), p. 2.

²⁵⁴ Translation quoted from: He Mingyong and Jing Peng, *Chinese Lexicology* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 301. See Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉's *Gaoyou wangshi yishu* 高郵王氏遺書 [The Posthumous Writings of the Wang Family of Gaoyou] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2000), p.203.

²⁵⁵ Luo Zhenyu, *Gaoyou wangshi yishu*, p. 116.

isolated bit of evidence cannot provide a definitive interpretation. Something that has no evidence to the contrary may be temporarily kept, and may gradually gain weight as more evidence is acquired, but if powerful negative evidence is found, it must be rejected'.²⁵⁶ Liang's statements effectively represent the evidence-based investigation conducted by later Qing scholars, who were influenced by Dai, Duan, and Wang.

3.3 Comparison between Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun

Duan Yucai, Wang Niansun, and Wang Yinzhi (the son of Wang Niansun) are representatives of the *Qian-Jia School*. Their works are milestones that show that Chinese linguistics has adopted a scientific approach. Many of their studies are worth passing on.²⁵⁷ As both Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun were disciples of Dai Zhen, most of their research methods correspond to each other.²⁵⁸ They wrote prefaces to each other's books and praised each other's academic achievements. Duan's and Wang's academic thoughts have many similarities, and together they promoted the development of Old Chinese linguistics. They demonstrated the academic characteristics of the *Qian-Jia School*, which include the proficiency in evidential research, evidence-based investigation, and a rigorous academic attitude.

The *Duanzhu* by Duan Yucai and *Guangya shuzheng* by Wang Niansun stand as eminent

²⁵⁶ Liang Qichao, *Qingdai xueshu gailun*, p.173. The original Chinese text is: '凡立一義，必憑證據；無證據而以臆度者，在所必擯'；'孤證不為定說。其無反證者姑存之，得有續證則漸信之，遇有力之反證則棄之。' Translation quoted from: *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, translated with introduction and notes by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, p. 67.

²⁵⁷ Wang Li 王力 (1900–1986), *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi* 中國語言學史 [History of Chinese Linguistics], (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), pp.165–172.

²⁵⁸ Liang Qichao once remarked: 'Among the later scholars of the Dai school there were many prominent men, but none could reflect more credit on it than Duan Yucai of Chin-tan, and Wang Niansun and his son Wang Yinzhi of Kaoyu [in Kiangsu]. They were collectively known to the world as Dai, Duan, and the two Wangs' (戴門後學，名家甚眾；而最能光大其業者，莫如金壇段玉裁，高郵王念孫及念孫子引之；故世稱戴、段、二王焉). See Liang Qichao's *Qingdai xueshu gailun*, p.169. Translation quoted from: *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, translated with introduction and notes by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, p. 63.

works in the history of Chinese linguistics. Both books showcase their practical experience and academic approach of *yinsheng qiuyi*. Later scholars highly value their academic status as inheritors of the past and pioneers of the future. Duan and Wang laid the foundations for the study of modern Chinese linguistics.²⁵⁹ In what follows, I compare and contrast Duan's and Wang's philological approaches and their applications of *yinsheng qiuyi*.

3.3.1 Similarities: Rigorous Approach and Emphasis on Sound

3.3.1.1 Application of the Method of *Yinsheng qiuyi*

Following Dai Zhen's exegetical ideas, Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun clearly recognised that sound and meaning had been combined in spoken words for a considerable period of time. Seeking glosses only through the form of the character, without considering the sound value, can lead to misunderstandings. The acoustic component behind the graphic form of a character is the crux of the expression of meaning. Duan and Wang both successfully employed the method of *yinsheng qiuyi*. Their achievements can be seen in their compliments on each other's work.

Wang Niansun, in the preface to the *Duanzhu*, remarked:

吾友段若膺，於古音之條理，察之精，剖之密，嘗為《六書音韻表》，立十七部以綜核之……而聲音之道大明；於許氏之說正義、借義，知其典要，觀其會通……而訓詁之道大明。訓詁、聲音明而小學明，小學明而經學明，蓋七百年來無此作矣。²⁶⁰

My friend Duan Ruoying (Duan Yucai's courtesy name) conducted a meticulous study of the principles of Old Chinese phonology. He authored the 'Liushu yinyun biao' and divided ancient rhymes into seventeen groups...Thus, the principles of phonology can be comprehended'; Duan grasped the essence of Xu Shen's explanations of the original and borrowed meanings of characters and observed their internal connections...Thus, the principles of exegesis can be understood. Once exegesis and phonology are

²⁵⁹ Yin Menglun 殷孟倫 (1908–1988), *Ziyun xiangren leigao* 子雲鄉人類稿 [Manuscripts of a Villager from Ziyun Town] (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1985), p. 221.

²⁶⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 1.

comprehended, philology can be understood. Once philology is comprehended, the ancient classics can be understood. No work of this magnitude has been accomplished in the last seven centuries.

In fact, this was also the hallmark of Wang's exegetical approach. Wang achieved great success in devising a reconstruction scheme for Old Chinese, which is considered to be the culmination in the development of the Qing scholarship. He emphasised that in seeking the ancient meaning through ancient pronunciation, attention should be given to how meaning is extended by analogy, unconstrained by form.²⁶¹ In this way, Wang clarified the intrinsic basis of ancient glosses and explored the organic connection of words. Duan praised him, saying that 'Wang is the laureate who is adept at deriving the meaning of the classics through ancient sound'.²⁶²

Sound not only provides the clue to the word that a loan character represents but also serves as the bond that connects cognate words. The practice of *yinsheng qiuyi* by Qing scholars generally clarified two issues. The first was to study the relationship between different graphs representing the same word, including variant graphs, loan graphs, and ancient and modern graphs. This belongs to the field of graphology and exegesis. The second was to link cognate words, which belongs to the field of etymology.²⁶³ Duan and Wang applied the method of *yinsheng qiuyi* to deal with both phonetic borrowing and cognate words.

Both Duan and Wang acknowledged the distinction between the loan characters in the ancient texts and phonetic borrowing as one of the principles of *liushu*. Duan explained the difference between the loan character in the *liushu* and the occurrence of loan characters in

²⁶¹ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 2. The original Chinese text is: '就古音以求古義，引伸觸類，不限形體。' Translation quoted from: He Mingyong and Jing Peng, *Chinese Lexicology*, p. 133.

²⁶² Ibid, p. 1. The original Chinese text is: '尤能以古音得經義，蓋天下一人而已矣。'

²⁶³ Gan Yong 甘勇, *Qingren xiaoxue zhushu wuzhong ciyuanxue de yanjiu* 清人小學注疏五種詞源學的研究 [A Study on Five Types of Etymology in Qing Dynasty Philological Annotations]. PhD dissertation (Wuhan: Huazhong University of Science and Technology, 2008), p.139.

the ancient texts, noting that:

大氏段借之始，始於本無其字……經傳子史，不用本字，而好用段借字，此或古積傳，或轉寫變易。²⁶⁴

Generally speaking, a loan character originally represented a word for which there was no existing graphic form... The use of loan characters instead of the original characters in ancient texts is sometimes the result of transmission over many generations, and sometimes the result of changes that occur in the process of transcription’.

Wang Niansun also distinguished the loan characters in ancient texts from those in the *liushu*, emphasising their importance in understanding classical texts. He noted:

蓋無本字而後假借他字，此謂造作文字之始也。至於經典古字，聲近而通，則有不限於無字之假借者。往往本字見存，而古本則不用本字而用同聲之字。學者改本字讀之，則怡然理順；依借字解之，則以文害辭。²⁶⁵

A loan character was initially used to represent a word for which there was no corresponding character. This is referred to as the process of character formation. As for the archaic characters in classical texts, homonyms are used even when their proper characters are attested. Students, when they read those characters, should [cognitively] change them to their proper characters [for the intended words], so that the texts make sense. If they should interpret them relying on loan characters, then they will let the written forms get in the way of the words.’²⁶⁶

Wang Niansun emphasised that it is important to distinguish ‘written forms’, *wen* 文, from ‘words’, *ci* 辭. In order for one to discern the words in various graphic guises, Wang says, ‘[one should] begin with characters for homonyms and near homonyms, and then match them against the meaning (i.e., the context) until the proper character is obtained.’²⁶⁷ According to Wang, the orthograph should have an identical or similar pronunciation to the loan graph and its meaning should fit with the context. Wang Yinzhi quoted his father Wang

²⁶⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 764.

²⁶⁵ Wang Yinzhi 王引之, *Jingyi shuwen* 經義述聞 [Interpretations of the Classics Heard from My Father], punctuated and collated by Yu Sizheng 虞思徵, Mao Tao 馬濤 and Xu Yejun 徐燁君 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2018), p. 1910.

²⁶⁶ Translation quoted from: Haeree Park, ‘Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts’, *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63. 4 (2009): 858.

²⁶⁷ Wang Yinzhi, *Jingyi shuwen*, p. 1910. The original Chinese text is: ‘由聲同聲近者，以意逆之，而得其本字。’ Translation quoted from: Haeree Park, ‘Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts’, *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63. 4 (2009): 858. T

Niansun's words, saying that:

訓詁之旨，存乎聲音。字之聲同聲近者，經傳往往假借。學者以聲求義，破其假借之字而讀以本字，則渙然冰釋，如其假借之字而強為之解，則詰籟為病矣。²⁶⁸

The essence of exegesis lies in sound. Phonetic borrowings between homonyms or near homonyms are common in ancient texts. By exploring glosses through sound and disclosing meaning based on the orthograph rather than the loan graph, an accurate explanation can be achieved. Otherwise, to force an explanation of the word according to the loan graph leads to misinterpretation.

The *Duanzhu*, Wang Niansun's *Dushu zazhi* 讀書雜誌 (Miscellaneous Notes on Reading Texts), and Wang Yinzhi's *Jingyi shuwen* are classic works on investigating loan characters and revising ancient glosses. The approach of *yinsheng qiuyi* to traditional exegesis was refined and skilfully applied in their works. When dealing with phonetic borrowing in ancient texts, they demonstrated an acute sense of sound and were not easily deceived by the graphic form of a character. Additionally, when seeking the meaning represented by a loan character, they not only considered the sound value by selecting a character that sounded similar to the loan graph, but also examined whether the proposed orthograph made sense in the context (*Kaozhi wenyi, canzhi guyin* 考之文義，參之古音).²⁶⁹ They also used other contemporaneous ancient literature as supporting evidence to ensure that the phonetic borrowing made sense both within the given text and across other literature (*Kuizhi benwen erxie, yanzhi tajuan ertong* 揆之本文而協，驗之他卷而通).²⁷⁰ When studying ancient texts, they took into account contextual meaning, grammar, and sentence patterns, rather than solely analysing individual characters or words.

The primary approach to creating a new word involves extending and differentiating the meaning of an existing word. There are two cases concerning the pronunciation of the new

²⁶⁸ Wang Yinzhi, *Jingyi shuwen*, p. 1.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1910.

²⁷⁰ Wang Yinzhi 王引之, *Jingzhuàn shìcí* 經傳釋詞 [Explanation of the Particles in the Classics and Commentaries], punctuated and collated by Li Hualei 李花蕾 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), p. 5.

word. One is that its pronunciation remains unchanged when a new meaning is added to the word. The other is that the pronunciation slightly changes because a new word is derived from the old one. Derived words with the same root often have the same or similar pronunciation and are semantically related. Therefore, sound often serves as a link in word derivation. Duan and Wang recognised the relationship between the sound and meaning of Chinese words. Duan proposed that ‘homonyms often have similar meanings’ (*Fan tongsheng, duo tongyi* 凡同聲，多同義).²⁷¹ Wang suggested that ‘the essence of the word gloss rests on the sounds, not the writing. Whenever sounds are identical or similar, the meanings are not too far removed either’.²⁷²

Wang Li states in his *History of Chinese Linguistics* that the emphasis on form rather than sound had dominated Chinese philology for one thousand and seven hundred years. This situation did not change until Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun shifted the emphasis from form to sound. As characters are used to record spoken language, homonyms may be semantically related. In other words, characters with the same phonetic element can share similar meanings. Furthermore, only if characters have similar sounds, can they be semantically related, regardless of the differences in their signific and phonetic elements. Once this is understood, many confusing words in the ancient texts can be deciphered. This is the revolution in exegesis. Duan and Wang have propelled the study of exegesis into a new historical stage. Their contributions are significant.²⁷³ In summary, both Duan and Wang excelled in historical phonology and exploring glosses through sound. Their theories share a common origin.

²⁷¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 101.

²⁷² Luo Zhenyu, *Gaoyou wangshi yishu*, p.197. The original Chinese text is: ‘夫訓詁之要在聲音不在文字。聲之相同相近者，義每不相遠。’ Translation quoted from: Wolfgang Behr, ‘Some Ideas on the Origin of Language in Late Imperial China’, p. 6.

²⁷³ Wang Li, *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi*, p. 160.

3.3.1.2 Utilising Philological Expertise in Textual Criticism

Duan and Wang rigorously integrated philological knowledge into textual criticism, adhering to a meticulous approach to evidence. Duan, upon encountering contradictory and questionable statements in the *Shuowen*, boldly presented his views and rectifications. The total number of characters Duan amended amounted to three thousand four hundred and ninety-eight.²⁷⁴ His method of corrections entailed deciphering meanings through both graphic form and sound. He referenced not only the *Shuowen* itself and the general principles he derived from it, but also glosses found in other ancient texts. Wang Yun 王筠 remarked, ‘How can people understand the *Shuowen* without Duan Yucai’s meticulous collation and revision, fully grasping the essence of Xu Shen?’²⁷⁵ Duan’s contributions extended beyond correcting errors in the *Shuowen*; he also amended other ancient texts by consulting the *Shuowen*. According to Yu Xingda 余行達, Duan revised a total of three hundred and two individual ancient texts in the *Duanzhu*,²⁷⁶ demonstrating comprehensiveness of his annotations to the *Shuowen*.

For instance, Duan rectified the misinterpretation of the character *du* 讀 in the *Shuowen*, where *song* 誦 was mistakenly used for *zhou* 籀.

Shuowen: 讀，籀書也。从言，賣聲。

Du 讀 is defined as ‘to read’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *mai* 賣 (to sell) as the phonetic.

²⁷⁴ Zhong Zheyu 鍾哲宇, *Duan Yucai yu Gui Fu Shuowen xue zhi bijiao yanjiu* 段玉裁與桂馥《說文》學之比較研究 [A Comparative Study of Duan Yucai’s and Gui Fu’s Scholarship on the *Shuowen*]. PhD dissertation (Taiwan: National Central University, 2013), p.218.

²⁷⁵ Wang Yun 王筠 (1784–1854), *Shuowen judou* 說文句讀 [Philological Studies of the Syntax of the Explanation of Characters in the *Shuowen*], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Continuation of the Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature), vol. 216 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2002), p. 335. The original Chinese text is: ‘苟非段茂堂力闢榛蕪，與許君因心相印，天下亦安知所謂《說文》?’

²⁷⁶ Yu Xingda 余行達, *Shuowen duanzhu yanjiu* 說文段注研究 [Research on Duan Yucai’s Annotations on the *Shuowen*] (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1998), pp. 26–34.

Duanzhu: 「籀」各本作「誦」，此淺人改也，今正。《竹部》曰：「籀，讀書也。」讀與籀疊韻而互訓。《庸風》傳曰：「讀，抽也。」《方言》曰：「抽，讀也。」蓋籀、抽古通用……抽繹其義蘊，至於無窮，是之謂讀。故卜筮之辭曰籀，謂抽繹《易》義而為之也。²⁷⁷

The character *zhou* 籀 (to read) is written as *song* 誦 (to chant) in other versions, which was arbitrarily changed by a person of superficial learning. In the *Shuowen*, the character *zhou* 籀, with the classifier *zhu* 竹 (bamboo), means 'to read (讀) a book'. 讀 and 籀 are rhymed syllables and are mutually explanatory. *Mao's Commentary* on 'Yongfeng' from the *Book of Poetry* notes that 讀 means 'to unravel' (抽). *Dialects* defines 抽 as 'to read' (讀). It could be suggested that 籀 and *chou* 抽 were used interchangeably in ancient times...To consistently 'unravel' the meaning would be 讀. Thus, divinatory words are called 籀, signifying to unravel the meaning of the *Changes*.

Note: Duan elucidated that 讀 and 籀 are mutually explanatory rhymed syllables. He rectified the misused 誦 for 籀 in terms of sound and meaning. Although 讀 /*duk/ and 籀 /*drjəgw/ are not rhymed syllables, they have the same initial /*d-/ and similar codas, characterised by velar sounds. Duan highlighted the mutually explanatory relationship between 讀 and 抽, as well as the interchangeable use between 籀 /*drjəgw/ and 抽 /*thrjəgw/, which are nearly homophonous. By leveraging sound to discern semantic connections among words, Duan's glosses attained clarity and thoroughness.²⁷⁸

In another example, Duan pointed out that the character *gong* 侏 should be defined as *damao* 大兒 instead of *xiaomao* 小兒.

Shuowen: 侏，小兒。從人，光聲。《國語》曰：「侏飯不及壺飧。」

Gong 侏 is defined as 'the appearance of smallness'. It is comprised of *ren* 人 (people) with *guang* 光 (light) as the phonetic. *Discourses of the States* notes: A banquet is not as good as the food in the pot.

Duanzhu: 小當作大，字之誤也。凡光聲之字多訓光大，無訓小者。《越語》：「句踐曰：『諺有之曰：觥飯不及壺飧。』」韋云：「觥，大也。」大飯謂盛饌。盛饌未具，不能以虛待之，不及壺飧之救飢疾也。……《韓詩》云：「觥，廓也。」許所據《國語》作「侏」。侏與觥音義同。《廣韻·十一唐》曰：「侏，盛兒」，用韋注。《十二庚》曰：「侏，小兒」，用《說文》。蓋《說文》之訛久矣。²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 91.

²⁷⁸ The statements after the word 'Note' in this dissertation are my own explanations.

²⁷⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 382.

The character *xiao* 小 (small) is wrongly written and should be replaced with *da* 大 (big). The phonetic element 光 is often associated with ‘great or big’ rather than small. ‘Yueyu’ (from *Guoyu*) states: ‘Gou Jian said: “There is a saying that a banquet (*gongfan* 觥飯) is not as good as the food in the pot”. Wei Zhao (204–273) noted: 觥 means ‘big’. Big food refers to the banquet. The banquet cannot be prepared quickly, so it is less effective than the food in the pot, which can relieve hunger immediately. *Han Ying’s Illustration of Poetry*: ‘觥 denotes “broad”.’ The sentence from *Discourses of the States* quoted by Xu Shen used 侏. 侏 and 觥 have the same sound and meaning. In the eleventh rhyme group of *tang* 唐 from *Guangyun*, 侏 is explained as ‘rich or abundant’, aligning with Wei’s note. In the twelfth rhyme group of *geng* 庚 from *Guangyun*, 侏 is explained as ‘small’, aligning with the *Shuowen*. The explanation in the *Shuowen* has long been wrong.

Note: Duan used the semantic function of the phonetic element 光 as well as the ancient notes to correct the error in the *Shuowen* as well as later dictionaries such as *Guangyun*.

Duan also questioned the controversial term ‘*shengsheng* 省聲’ (abbreviated phonetic element) in the *Shuowen*. Duan noted:

許書言省聲，多有可疑者。取一偏旁，不載全字，指為某字之省。若家之為豕省，哭之从獄省，皆不可信……愚以為家入豕部，从豕宀。哭入犬部，从犬呌。皆會意，而移以言人。²⁸⁰

The abbreviated phonetic elements mentioned by Xu Shen in the *Shuowen* are mostly questionable. The term 省聲 refers to an abbreviated form of a character. For instance, the character *jia* 家 is said to have the abbreviated *jia* 豕 as the phonetic. The character *ku* 哭 is said to have the abbreviated *yu* 獄 as the phonetic. These statements lack reliability...In my view, 家 should be placed under the classifier *shi* 豕 (pig) and defined as an associative compound composed of 豕 and *mian* 宀 (roof). 哭 should be placed under the classifier *quan* 犬 (dog) and defined as an associative compound composed of 犬 and *xuan* 呌 (clamouring)’. Both characters are associative compounds, which have been transposed to describing people.


Duan also noted under the character *jia* 家 (home):

竊謂此篆本義乃豕之尻也，引申段借以為人之尻，字義之轉移多如此。牢，牛之尻也，引伸為所以拘罪之^陸牢，庸有異乎。²⁸¹

In my opinion, this character originally meant the place where pigs live and was later extended to denote human dwellings. The semantic shift in meaning can also be seen in the character *lao* 牢 (prison), which originally referred to the pen for oxen but was later extended to denote the prison for humans. The same applies to 家.

²⁸⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 63.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 341.

Note: Duan's assertions find support in the oracle bone inscriptions. The oracle bone inscription of the character 家 is written as  which is an associative compound combining the intentions of 豕 and 宀.²⁸²

Duan and Wang did not blindly follow the commentaries of Han scholars but revised the ancient texts using their knowledge of graphology, phonology, exegesis, and grammar. They verified many misused characters, redundant words, and lost words. They also corrected the mistakes made by their predecessors. Wang Niansun stated:

說經者，期於得經義而已。前人傳注不皆合於經，則擇其合經者從之。其皆不合，則以己意逆經意，而參之他經，證以成訓。雖別為之說，亦無不可。²⁸³

Commentators aimed to interpret the classics. The commentaries of our predecessors are not all appropriate. We should choose the one that corresponds to the classic. If none of the previous commentaries is appropriate, we should seek the meaning of the classic according to our own analysis by referring to other ancient texts to provide glosses and matching them against the meaning of the context until the proper gloss is obtained. It does not matter if our glosses differ from the previous ones'.

When Wang commented on *Guangya*, he pointed out the mistakes made by Zhang Yi 張揖 (fl. 3rd Century CE). In the preface to his *Guangya shuzheng*, Wang stated: 'Regarding the erroneous notes made by Zhang and previous scholars, I have thoroughly investigated to verify their mistakes'.²⁸⁴

For example, under the gloss of the characters denoting 'shiyè 視也' (to look), Wang noted:

啓者，《說文》：「啓，省視也。」《釋言》篇云：「啓，窺也。」古通作「啟」。《論語·泰伯篇》：「曾子有疾，召門弟子曰：啟予足，啟予手。」啟者，視也。鄭玄訓「啟」為「開」，失之。²⁸⁵

In the *Shuowen*, the definition of the character *qi* 啓 is 'to examine or to inspect'. *Erya*, 'Shiyan' explained 啓 as 'to peep or to spy'. 啓 is written as 啟 in ancient times. In the

²⁸² Yu Xingwu 于省吾 (1896–1984), *Jiagu wenzi gulin* 甲骨文字詁林 [The Collective Commentaries of Oracle Bone Inscriptions], vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), p. 1997.

²⁸³ Wang Yinzhi, *Jingyi shuwen*, p. 1.

²⁸⁴ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 2. The original Chinese text is: '其或張君誤采，博考以證其失；先儒誤說，參酌以悟其非。'

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 76.

sentence ‘曾子有疾，召門弟子曰：啟予足，啟予手’ (When Zengzi was ill, he called his disciples to his bed and said, ‘Examine my feet and my hands’) from the *Analects*, 8.3,²⁸⁶ the character 啟 means ‘to examine’. Zheng Xuan interpreted 啟 as ‘to uncover’, which is inappropriate.

Note: Wang thought that 啟 should be explained as ‘to look at’, as 啟 was used for 啓 (to examine) in ancient times. According to Zheng Xuan, ‘*Qi yuzu, qi yushou* 啟予足，啟予手’ means ‘to uncover my feet and hands’. This explanation is less direct than ‘to look at my feet and hands. Examine them to see if they are wounded’.

In the explanation of 墟 under the gloss ‘*juye* 居也’ (dwelling place), Wang quoted the sentence ‘*jingwa bu keyi yu yuhai zhe, juyu xuye* 井蛙不可以語於海者，拘於虛也’ (You cannot discuss the sea with a frog at the bottom of a well because it is confined to its dwelling place)²⁸⁷ from *Zhuangzi*, ‘Autumn Floods’, noting that 虛 is equivalent to 墟 which means ‘dwelling place’. Cui Zhuan’s 崔譔 (317–420) explanation of 虛 as ‘empty’ is incorrect.²⁸⁸ Wang pointed out that 虛 is the original character for 墟, which originally denoted ‘big mound’ and was extended into the notion of ‘dwelling place’. Wang was aware of the interchangeable use between phonetic element (e.g. 虛) and phonetic compound (e.g. 墟) in ancient texts and used the phonetic element to restore the orthograph.

3.3.1.3 Referencing Various Sources

Duan and Wang did not merely discuss theory but used a wealth of concrete materials to demonstrate their theories and views, thereby validating their propositions. They valued actual linguistic material and were adept at analysing ancient texts and making connections. When deciphering a word, they looked at the word across different texts rather than focusing

²⁸⁶ Translated following Wu Guozhen with slight modifications. Wu Guozhen, *A New Annotated English Version of the Analects of Confucius*, p. 211.

²⁸⁷ *Zhuangzi* 莊子, trans. Wang Rongpei 汪榕培, p. 261.

²⁸⁸ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 123.

on one text only. They consulted a wide range of philological materials, including ancient dictionaries and ancient commentaries. They often quoted extensively, collected supporting evidence, and did not jump to conclusions without sufficient evidence. Before drawing a conclusion, they gathered examples from a wide range of references, as careful investigation guaranteed the accuracy of their conclusion.

3.3.2 Different Approaches to Word Glosses

Generally speaking, the main difference between Duan's and Wang's approaches to word glosses is that Duan clarified the development of a word's meaning from its original meaning to its extended meanings and borrowed meanings from a diachronic point of view whereas Wang applied a synchronic point of view, emphasising sound to explore the connection between words from a linguistic point of view. Duan employed the original meaning of a character as a foundational reference point to investigate its extended and borrowed meanings. He sought the meaning of a character through both its graphic form and sound, which made his practice of word glosses more comprehensive. However, his occasional attachment to the graphic form sometimes hindered him from a linguistic perspective, especially when dealing with potential cognate words and polysyllabic morphemes. This may be due to Duan's focus on the *Shuowen*, a dictionary of graphs rather than words, which results in Duan's restriction to the graphic form.

Wang Niansun, on the other hand, was more concerned with a synchronic view of word glosses and had a more incisive view in linking potential cognate words, especially in Old Chinese, when the writing system was not yet fixed, the spoken words was prioritised over the writing system. Sound, rather than form, is the crux of ancient glossing. However, Wang lacked the analysis of the development of a word's meaning. He neglected the original

meaning of a character through the analysis of graphic form.

3.3.2.1 Diachronic Development versus Synchronic Connection

When explaining character (*zi* 字) or a word (*ci* 詞), Duan emphasised the development of a character's meaning, so he often used the term 'extend in meaning' (*yinshen* 引申). Wang emphasised the connection between the meanings of words, so he often used the term 'connect in meaning' (*yitong* 義通). Huang Zhuo 黃焯 (1902–1984) noted that 'Duan used sound to explain characters, recognising the differences between extended meaning, borrowed meaning, and the original meaning of a character. Wang used sound to connect the explanatory glosses and realised that the sounds of the words and the explanatory glosses were inseparable'.²⁸⁹

Duan asserted that:

凡字有本義焉，有引申、假借之餘義焉。守其本義而棄其餘義者，其失也固；習其餘義而忘其本義者，其失也蔽。²⁹⁰

Every character has an original meaning and extended meanings. Sticking to the original meaning without paying attention to the extended meanings results in obstinacy. Paying attention to the extended meanings, while neglecting the original meaning results in obstruction.

He also noted that:

本義既明，則用此字之聲而不用此字之義者，乃可定為假借，本義明而假借亦無不明矣。²⁹¹

Once the original meaning is clear, the case that uses the sound rather than the meaning of a character is determined to be the borrowed meaning. After the original meaning is clear, the borrowed meaning is clear.

Duan emphasised that the extended meanings are derived from the original meaning (*jiu*

²⁸⁹ Huang Zhuo 黃焯 (1902–1984), *Huang Kan wenzi shengyun xungu biji* 黃侃文字聲韻訓詁筆記 [Huang Kan's Notes on Graphology, Phonology, and Explanatory Glosses] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), p. 4. The original Chinese text is: '段氏則以聲音之道施之文字，而知假借引申與本字之分別；王氏則以聲音貫穿訓詁，而知聲音訓詁之為一物。'

²⁹⁰ Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Jingyunlou ji* 經韻樓集 [The Collected Works of the Jingyun Tower] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), p. 10.

²⁹¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 764.

zi benyi yinshen zhi 就字本義引申之);²⁹² exploring the extended meanings should go back to the original meaning (*bi yuanqi benyi weiyan* 必原其本義為言);²⁹³ seek the source to tease out the branches, while master the essence to explain the details (*Taoyuan yi naliu, zhiyao yi shuoxiang* 討源以納流, 執要以說詳).²⁹⁴

The original meaning of a character, which is the starting point, determines the extension of its meaning. The extension of a character's meaning is an important rule of word derivation, resulting in polysemy and word differentiation. Duan emphasised exploring the historical development of a character's meaning by identifying its original meaning, which not only provides the clue for character derivation but also serves as a reference standard for borrowed meanings. In this way, the development of a character's meaning can be clearly traced. In his annotations, Duan not only illustrated the original and extended meanings of a character but also clarified the borrowed use of a character in ancient texts. Duan had a diachronic observation of the evolvement of a character's form, sound, and meaning. Jiang Yuan 江沅 (1735–1815) remarked:

許書之要，在明文字之本義而已。先生發明許書之要，在善推許書每字之本義而已矣……本義明，而後餘義明，引申之義亦明，假借之義亦明。²⁹⁵

The main purpose of the *Shuowen* is to clarify the original meaning of a character. Duan has been faithful to Xu Shen's intention and clarifies the original meaning of characters... Once the original meaning is clear, the derived meanings are clear, that is, the extended meanings and the borrowed meanings are clear.

The following examples show how Duan revealed the development of a character's meaning in his annotations to the *Shuowen*.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 翼, 翬也。

Yi 翼 denotes 'wings'.

²⁹² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 10.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 394.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 772.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 796.

Duanzhu: 翼必兩相輔，故引申為輔翼。《卷阿》傳曰：「道可馮依以為輔翼也。」《行葦》鄭箋云：「在前曰引，在旁曰翼。」又，凡敬者必如兩翼之整齊，故毛傳曰：「翼，敬也。」鄭箋云：「小心翼翼，恭慎貌。」²⁹⁶

The wings must complement each other to assist [in flight]. Thus, 翼 is extended to signify assisting. *Mao's Commentary* on 'Juan'e' from the *Book of Poetry* states: 'It can be relied upon as assistance'. Zheng's annotation on 'Xingwei' notes: 'At the front it is called leading; at the side it is called assisting.' Being respectful is as orderly as two wings. Hence *Mao's Commentary* states: '翼 means being respectful'. Zheng's annotation states: 'Xiaoxin yiyi 小心翼翼 means the appearance of being respectful and cautious'.

Note: The original meaning of the character 翼 is the wings of birds. Duan clarified the trace of the extension of its meaning, which includes 'to assist', 'being respectful', and 'being cautious'.


Example 2:

Shuowen: 皮，剝取獸革者謂之皮。

Pi 皮 denotes 'to peel off the skin of animals'.

Duanzhu: 剝，裂也，謂使革與肉分裂也……取獸革者謂之「皮」，皮，被。被，析也，見「木部」。因之所取謂之「皮」矣，引伸凡物之表皆曰「皮」，凡去物之表亦皆曰「皮」。²⁹⁷

Bo 剝 denotes 'to separate', which means to separate the hides from the flesh...To get the animal hides is called 皮. 皮 is to say *bi* 被. The character 被, with the classifier 'wood', means 'to dissect'. Hence, what is taken from it is called 皮, and by extension, the surface of any object is also called 皮. Likewise, when removing the surface layer of an object, it is also called 皮.

Note: The bronze inscription of 皮 is written as , depicting the action of peeling off the skin of animals.²⁹⁸ Starting from Xu Shen's explanation, Duan referred to the semantic function of the phonetic element 皮 in 被. Then he clarified the original meaning of 皮, which is a verb (to get the animal hides). Based on the original meaning, he further teased out the development of the meaning of the word from movement (to peel off) to stillness (the

²⁹⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 588.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 123.

²⁹⁸ Zhou Fagao 周法高 (1915–1994), *Jinwen gulin* 金文詁林 [The Collective Commentaries of Bronze Inscriptions], vol. 3 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1975), p. 1860.

separated hides), and from the specific (to peel off the hides) to the general (to remove the surface).


Example 3:

Shuowen: 至, 鳥飛從高下至地也。

Zhi 至 denotes ‘the bird flies from a height down to the ground’.

Duanzhu: 凡云來至者, 皆於此義引申假借。引申之為「懇至」, 為「極至」。許云「到, 至也」, 「臻, 至也」, 此本義之引申也。又云: 「親, 至也。」「覲, 至也。」此餘義之引申也。²⁹⁹

In all expressions where 至 is used, they are all extensions or borrowings of this meaning. 至 is extended to denote ‘being earnest’ and ‘extreme’. Xu notes that, ‘*Dao* 到 (arriving) means 至’ and ‘*zhen* 臻 (to reach, utmost) means 至’; they are extensions of the original meaning. Again, Xu notes that *qin* 親 (being close) means 至’ and ‘*qin* 覲 (intimate) means 至’. They are derived from the extended meanings.

Note: Starting from the original meaning of 至, Duan clarified the meanings derived from it as well as the meanings derived from the extended meanings. Duan’s analysis of the meanings of 至 ranges from the specific (the bird flies from a height down to the ground) to the general (to arrive) and from the concrete (to arrive, to reach) to the abstract (being earnest, extreme). The oracle bone inscription of 至 is written as , representing the shot arrow falling to the ground,³⁰⁰ which differs from Xu Shen’s explanation. However, whether it is a bird or an arrow does not affect the extended meanings of ‘arriving’ and ‘utmost’. Duan’s elucidation of the development of the meaning of 至 is clear and logical.

Example 4:

Shuowen: 比, 密也。

Bi 比 denotes ‘dense or to be close to’.

Duanzhu: 本義謂相親密也。餘義備也、及也、次也、校也、例也、類也、頻也、擇善而從之也、阿黨也, 皆其所引伸。許書無「篋」字。古只作「比」, 見《蒼頡篇》、《釋名》、《漢書匈奴傳》。《周禮》或段「比」為「庀」。³⁰¹


²⁹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 590.

³⁰⁰ Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒 (1898–1991), *Jiaguwen zidian* 甲骨文字典 [Dictionary of Oracle Bone Inscriptions] (Chengdu: Sichuan cishu chubanshe, 1989), p. 1272.

³⁰¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 390.

Its original meaning is ‘being close or intimate’. Its derived meanings include ‘to assist, to be equal to, to compare, contrasting with, model after, to emulate, proportion, to follow what is good, and to collude with’. These are all extended meanings of 比. The *Shuowen* does not have the character *bi* 篦 (fine-toothed comb), which was written as 比 in ancient times, and can be seen in *Cangjie*, *Shiming*, and *History of the Former Han*, ‘Biography of the Huns’. In the *Zhou Rites*, 比 is borrowed for *bi* 庇 (shelter).

Note: Starting from the original meaning of 比 in the *Shuowen*, Duan sufficiently teased out the extended meanings and borrowed meanings of 比.

Example 5: In the *Shuowen*, the character *fang* 方 is explained as ‘paralleled boats’. Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒 (1898–1991) posited that the oracle bone inscription for 方  resembles the shape of a plough,³⁰² whereas He Linyi proposed that 方 originally signifies ‘dividing things using a knife’.³⁰³ In his annotations, Duan quoted *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* and clarified the extended meanings of 方, including ‘raft’ (*fu* 桴), ‘to compare’ (*bifang* 比方), ‘circumference’ (*fangyuan* 方圓), ‘upright’ (*fangzheng* 方正), and ‘direction’ (*fangxiang* 方向). Additionally, Duan used quotations from the *Book of Documents* and *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* to present the borrowed uses of 方 for *fang* 防 (to defend), *pang* 旁 (vast), and *fu* 甫 (great). Duan provided a comprehensive analysis of the meanings of 方, pointing out its extended meanings and borrowed uses in ancient texts.

Example 6:

Shuowen: 理, 治玉也。

Li 理 denotes ‘to carve a jade’.

Duanzhu: 《戰國策》：「鄭人謂玉之未理者為璞。」是「理」為剖析也。玉雖至堅而治之得其髓理以成器不難，謂之「理」。凡天下一事一物，必推其情至於無憾而後即安，是之謂「天理」，是之謂「善治」，此引申之義也。戴先生《孟子字義疏證》曰：「理者，察之而幾微，必區以別之名也，是故謂之分理。在物之質曰肌理，曰腠理，曰文理。得其分則有條而不紊，謂之條理。鄭注《樂記》曰：『理者，分也。』許叔重曰：『知分理之可相別異也。』古人之言天理何謂也？曰：理也者，情不爽失也。未有情不得而理得者也。天理云者，言乎自然之

³⁰² Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen zidian*, p. 953.

³⁰³ He Linyi 何琳儀 (1943–2017), *Zhanguo guwen zidian* 戰國古文字典 [Dictionary of the Warring States Scripts] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), p. 713.

分理也。自然之分理，以我之情絜人之情，而無不得其平是也。」³⁰⁴

Records on the Warring States Period notes: ‘The people of Zheng State call an unpolished jade 璞.’ Therefore, 理 means ‘to carve’. Although jade is hard, it is not difficult to carve it according to its veins (*saili* 髓理). All things should be explored according to their principles, and then there will be no regrets. It is the natural principle (*tianli* 天理) and good management. This is the derived meaning of 理. Dai Zhen notes in his *Commentary on the Meaning of Terms in Mencius*: ‘理 means to observe things subtly and find their distinctions. This is called “divisional principles” (*fenli* 分理). In objects, it is called “skin texture” (*jili* 肌理), “the interstices in the skin” (*couli* 腠理), and “vein” (*wenli* 文理). Understanding their divisions and putting things in order is called orderliness (*tiaoli* 條理). Zheng Xuan’s *Commentary on the Book of Music* states: “理 is division”. Xu Shuzhong notes: “Understanding divisional principles allows for differentiation”. What did ancient people mean by the term 天理 (natural principle)? It is said: 理 refers to the unwavering essence of emotions. There have never been principles devoid of appropriate emotions. When referring to 天理 (natural principle), it speaks of the divisional principles inherent in nature. The divisional principles of nature regulate our emotions in harmony with those of others, leaving nothing but equanimity.’

Note: Duan referred to Dai’s interpretation and analysed the meanings of 理. He first clarified the original meaning of 理 through the graphic form of the classifier *yu* 玉 (jade) according to Xu’s explanation. Then, based on the original meaning (to carve the jade according to its veins), he further teased out the extended meanings of 理, including *fenli* 分理 (divisional principle), *jili* 肌理 (skin texture), *couli* 腠理 (the interstices in the skin), *wenli* 文理 (vein), *tiaoli* 條理 (order), *tianli* 天理 (natural principle), and *qingli* 情理 (sensitivity).

Unlike Duan Yucai, Wang Niansun did not discuss the original meaning of a character but presented different meanings of a character or a word and explored their synchronic connections. He also listed the words that are related in sound and meaning, comparing them to find their differences and connections. Wang was more concerned with the derived meanings of a character and emphasised that:

訓詁之旨，本於聲音。故有聲同字異，聲近義同，雖或類聚群分，實亦同條共貫。³⁰⁵

The essence of explanatory glosses lies in sound. Thus, there are different words that

³⁰⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 15.

³⁰⁵ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 6.

have the same sound, and words that have a similar sound and the same meaning. Although they may belong to different word families, there are connections between them’.

Wang took a word as his starting point and did not confine himself to the graphical form, which could lead to a neglect of the graphological approach. In other words, Wang was relatively more concerned with words than with characters.

In many glosses of his *Guangya shuzheng*, Wang analysed the possible etymons of words and linked potential cognate words. Starting from the gloss of one word, he associated it with other words and explored the semantic connection between a series of words that have similar pronunciations in Old Chinese. Wang often used ‘semantically related’ (*tongyi* 同義) to analyse the relationship between characters. However, he did not have a deep exploration of the extended meanings of a character. Wang focused on presenting the multiple meanings of a character or a word rather than revealing the origin and historical development of a character or a word’s meaning. The following are some of the examples from his *Guangya shuzheng*.

Example 1: In the explanation of *haotao* 號咷 under the gloss ‘*mingye* 鳴也’ (crying sound), Wang noted:

號咷者，《同人》九五：「先號咷而後笑」。《釋文》云：「號咷，啼呼也。」
《說文》：「楚謂兒泣不止曰噉咷。」「噉咷」與「號咷」亦同義。哭聲謂之噉咷，歌聲亦謂之噉咷。《漢書·韓延壽傳》云「噉咷楚歌」是也。³⁰⁶

In the *Tongren* Hexagram, nine at the fifth line notes: ‘He cries aloud at first, and then he laughs.’³⁰⁷ *Shiwen* notes: ‘*Haotao* 號咷 means wailing’. The *Shuowen* explains: ‘In the state of Chu, *jiatiao* 噉咷 means the constant crying of children.’ 噉咷 and 號咷 have the same meaning. The sound of crying and the sound of singing are both called 噉咷. In the sentence 噉咷楚歌 (the songs of the state of Chu are loud and clear) from the *History of the Former Han*, ‘Biography of Han Yanshou’, 噉咷 denotes the sound of singing.

Note: Wang explained that *haotao* 號咷 represents both the sound of crying and the

³⁰⁶ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 106.

³⁰⁷ *Zhou Yi*, trans. Fu Huisheng, p. 89.

sound of singing, but he did not clarify the formation and development of the word's meaning. We could only deduce that the sound of singing and the sound of crying share the same characteristic, which is 'loud voice'. However, the trace of the development of the word's meaning is unknown.

Example 2: In the explanation of *cong* 鏜 under the gloss 'zhuangye 撞也' (to strike), Wang noted:

《文選·子虛賦》「搃金鼓」。李善注引韋昭曰：「搃，擊也。」字亦作「鏜」。《史記·吳王濞傳》：「即使人鏜殺吳王」……《索隱》引韋昭曰：「鏜，撞也。」撞謂之「鏜」，故矛亦謂之「鏜」。《方言》云：「矛，吳、揚、江、淮、南楚五湖之間，或謂之鏜。」³⁰⁸

For the phrase '*chuang jingu* 搃金鼓' (striking the gong and beating the drums) from *Wenxuan*, 'Zixu fu', Li Shan 李善 (630–689) quoted Wei Zhao's 韋昭 (204–273) note, saying that '*chuang* 搃 means to strike or to beat'. 搃 is also written as *cong* 鏜. For the sentence '*ji shiren congsha wuwang* 即使人鏜殺吳王' (He immediately had someone strike and kill the king of the state of Wu) from the *Records of the Grand Historian*, 'Biography of Liu Bi', *Hidden Meanings in the Records of the Grand Historian* quotes Wei Zhao's note that '*cong* 鏜 means to beat'. To beat is called 鏜. Thus, spear is also called 鏜. *Dialects* notes that 'in the region surrounding the Five Lakes of Wu 吳, Yang 揚, Jiang 江, Huai 淮, and Nanchu 南楚, the term for "spear" (*mao* 矛) may be referred to as 鏜'.

Note: Wang showed that 鏜 means not only 'to strike or to beat', but also 'spear'.

However, he did not clarify the development of the meanings of 鏜. It is unknown whether the sense of 'striking' is derived from the sense of 'spear' or not.

Example 3: Under the gloss of characters which denote '*meiye* 美也' (fine, beautiful), Wang noted:

「美」从「大」，與「大」同意。故大謂之將，亦謂之皇。美謂之皇，亦謂之將。美謂之賁，猶大謂之墳也。美謂之膚，猶大謂之甫也。³⁰⁹

The character 美 has the element *da* 大 (big, great). 美 is synonymous with 大. 大 is called '*jiang* 將' (grand), as well as '*huang* 皇' (magnificent). 美 is called

³⁰⁸ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 354.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

‘皇’ as well as ‘將’. 美 being called ‘*fen* 賁’ (large) is akin to 大 being called ‘*fen* 墳’ (big). 美 being called ‘*fu* 膚’ (great) is akin to 大 being called ‘*fu* 甫’ (extensive).

Note: 大 and 美 have a similar meaning. 將 /*tsjang/ and 皇 /*gwang/ are rhymed syllables. They are semantically related to 大. Since 賁 is the phonetic element of 墳, 賁 and 墳 have the same pronunciation. The case of 大 and 墳 having a similar meaning is equivalent to that of 美 and 賁 having a similar meaning. In addition, 膚 /*pjag/ is homophonous with 甫 /*pjagx/. The case of 大 and 甫 being synonymous is equivalent to that of 美 and 膚 being synonymous. Wang used sound as a link to connect the meanings of all these synonymous characters.

From the above examples, we can see that Wang broadly collected words that were phonetically related. He then extended individual glossing to a synthetic analysis of synonymous words. Wang did not analyse the derivation of a character’s meaning based on its original meaning as Duan did, but presented the connection between different meanings of characters in parallel and demonstrated their relationships. Zhang Taiyan remarked that ‘Wang was good at the subtle observation of words. However, the neglect of orthograph in conveying meaning is a shortcoming in his approach.’³¹⁰ Wang based his research on the nature of the word rather than on the graphic contribution to the meaning of a character.

In their practice of word glosses, Duan emphasised exploring the origin and clarifying the derivation, while Wang focused on elucidating the connection between words based on specific meanings. The divergent emphases in their analysis led to the use of different terms in their explanations. Duan employed ‘*yinshen* 引申’ (it is extended to...), whereas Wang used ‘*yi weizhi* 亦謂之’ (it is also called...). ‘*Yinshen* 引申’ underscores the dynamic process from the original meaning to the derived meanings, while ‘*yi weizhi* 亦謂之’ emphasises the

³¹⁰ Zhang Taiyan, *Guogu lunheng*, p. 9.

different meanings of a character or a word and their interconnectedness.

In terms of the method of ‘seeking gloss through sound’, Wang and Duan are basically in agreement. Their difference lies in their attention to graphic form. This is related to their research objects. Duan made annotations to the *Shuowen*, a dictionary dealing with graphology. Thus, Duan’s emphasis was on form, sound, and meaning, and he considered both characters and language. Wang made commentaries on *Guangya*, a dictionary of glosses. Thus, Wang emphasised sound and meaning, taking language as the starting point without considering graphic forms.

3.3.2.2 Application of the *Youwen* Theory

Character derivation largely reflects the rule of word differentiation. Hu Qiguang notes: ‘The phonetic compound is comprised of the phonetic element and the semantic element. The phonetic element often manifests the original meaning of the phonetic compound.’³¹¹ Phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element usually have the same origin. Duan proposed that ‘the phonetic element of the phonetic compound is often close to the overall meaning of the character’ (*Xiesheng zhi pianpang, duo yu ziyi xiangjin* 諧聲之偏旁，多與字義相近).³¹² According to Shen Jianshi’s statistics, there are sixty-eight annotations in the *Duanzhu* where the *youwen* theory is applied.³¹³ Phonetic compounds constitute a significant portion of Chinese characters. Mastering phonetic compounds means mastering the majority of Chinese characters. However, the *youwen* theory, which explores meaning through the phonetic element, has two shortcomings: restriction to the graphic form and arbitrariness.

³¹¹ Hu Qiguang 胡奇光, *Zhongguo xiaoxue shi* 中國小學史 [The History of Chinese Philology], (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2018), p. 83.

³¹² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 2.

³¹³ Shen Jianshi 沈兼士, *Shen Jianshi xueshu lunwenji* 沈兼士學術論文集 [Collection of Academic Papers of Shen Jianshi] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), p. 94.

Unfortunately, Duan Yucai suffered from both shortcomings.

Both Duan and Wang applied the *youwen* theory in their research. However, the same series of phonetic compounds have different meanings in their research. For example, phonetic compounds with *cong* 窗 (window) as the phonetic element have the sense of ‘unobstructed in the middle’ in Duan’s research, while they are related to the sense of ‘green’ in Wang’s research. Phonetic compounds with *piao* 票 as the phonetic element convey the sense of ‘end’ in Duan’s research, while they are related to the sense of ‘marking’ or ‘light (in weight)’ in Wang’s research. Hu Jiming 胡繼明 notes that the reasons for this phenomenon are generally as follows: some phonetic compounds have the same origin and then differentiated into branches. Some phonetic elements have more than one meaning, leading to different meanings of phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element. Some are due to the phonetic borrowing of the phonetic element.³¹⁴ The semantic function of the phonetic element is complicated, including cases where one phonetic element contains one meaning, such as phonetic element *lei* 厽 which contains the meaning of ‘accumulating’; different phonetic elements convey the same meaning, such as phonetic element *jing* 京 and *yu* 于, both of which convey the meaning of ‘big’; one phonetic element conveys different meanings, such as phonetic element *jia* 段, which conveys the meanings of ‘red’ and ‘remote’.

Duan’s statements about the semantic function of the phonetic element were more obvious than Wang’s, but Duan’s analyses were occasionally arbitrary. For example, in the *Shuowen*, under the character *xia* 𧇧, Duan noted that phonetic compounds with 段 as the phonetic element are *all* related to ‘red’ (*Fan jiasheng jieyou chise* 凡段聲皆有赤色).³¹⁵ In

³¹⁴ Hu Jiming 胡繼明, ‘*Shuowen jiezi zhu he guangya shuzheng de youwen shuo* 《說文解字注》和《廣雅疏證》的右文說’ [The *Youwen* Theory in the *Shuowen jiezi zhu* and *Guangya shuzheng*], *Sichuan daxue xuebao* 四川大學學報 4 (1993): 65–68.

³¹⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 586.

Guangya shuzheng, under the gloss ‘*chixia* 赤瑕’ (red flaw in jade), Wang noted that ‘*xia* 瑕 is used to depict something red. Red cloud is called *xia* 霞. Red jade is called *xia* 瑕. A horse with red and white colour is called *xia* 駮. They are semantically related (*qiyi yiye* 其義一也).’³¹⁶ Instead of asserting ‘phonetic compounds with the phonetic element A are all related to the meaning of B’ (*Fancong mousheng, jieyou mouyi* 凡從某聲，皆有某義), Wang often used more objective words like ‘they are similar in sound and meaning’ (*Shengyi bing xiangjin ye* 聲義並相近也) or ‘they have the same meaning’ (*Yi bingtong ye* 義並同也). For example, under the gloss ‘*yaye* 厓也 (bank)’, Wang noted that ‘the edge of the mouth is called *chun* 唇 (lip). The edge of the water is called *chun* 澹 (bank). The edge of the house is called *chen* 宸 (eave). They are similar in sound and meaning.’³¹⁷ Under the gloss ‘*moye* 末也 (end)’, Wang noted that ‘the point of a weapon is called *feng* 鋒 (sharp point). The top of mountain is called *feng* 峰 (peak). They have the same meaning of “point”.’³¹⁸

In addition, when Duan discussed cognate words, he did not completely break out of the restriction of the graphic form. He sometimes confined himself to the phonetic element, limiting the range of potential cognate words he could link. Wang transcended the limitation of the phonetic element. Based on sound, Wang connected many phonetic compounds with different phonetic elements having a similar meaning. The phonetic compounds that Wang linked are thus more extensive. For instance, under the character *jin* 衿 (collar or lapel of a coat), Duan associated 衿 with *jin* 衿 (collar or lapel of a garment) and noted that ‘all the characters with the phonetic element “*jin* 金” (gold) or “*jin* 今” (today) are associated with the meaning of “forbidding” (*jin* 禁).’³¹⁹ In the explanation of *qin* 琴 under the gloss ‘*jinye* 禁也’

³¹⁶ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 699.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 711.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 394.

(to forbid, to hinder), Wang presented the characters *qin* 鉦 (to capture, to seize), *qin* 掄 (to seize, to clutch), and *qin* 禽 (to capture, to seize), noting that ‘characters pronounced as *qin* 琴 are all related to the sense of “forbidding”.’³²⁰ The characters presented by Wang do not necessarily share the same phonetic element, but they do share a similar pronunciation. In another example, under the character *jian* 堅 (hard) in the *Shuowen*, Duan noted that ‘*jian* 堅 denotes “solid” in relation to earth and stone. *Jin* 緊 denotes “tight” in relation to silk. *Jian* 堅 denotes “hard” in relation to metal.’³²¹ Duan linked three characters with the same phonetic element *qian* 𠂔 and identified the classifiers to which they belonged. Under the gloss ‘*jianye* 堅也’ (hard), Wang noted that ‘堅、緼、賢、贛、擊、擊、𠂔、臣 are similar in sound and meaning’.³²² Wang linked these eight characters and pointed out that the phonetic compounds with *qian* 𠂔 as well as with *chen* 臣 as the phonetic element have the meaning of ‘being hard’.

Moreover, Wang was clearly aware that the same phonetic element could differentiate into various meanings. He uncovered different etymologies contained within the same phonetic element. For instance, phonetic compounds with *dan* 單 as the phonetic element carry the senses of ‘angry’ and ‘relieved’. Similarly, phonetic compounds with *qi* 豈 as the phonetic element embody the senses of ‘grinding’, ‘hard’, ‘bright’, and ‘white’. Wang’s exploration of the *youwen* theory can be sporadically seen in his *Guangya shuzheng*. Although his examples are unsystematic, his collection is more meticulous and extensive.³²³ In this respect, Wang surpassed Duan by considering words as the starting point for linking potential cognate words, without restricting himself to the graphic form of the characters.

³²⁰ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 277.

³²¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 709.

³²² Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 96.

³²³ Hu Jiming, ‘Shuowen jiezi zhu he guangya shuzheng de youwen shuo’, *Sichuan daxue xuebao* 4 (1993): 67.

3.3.2.3 Recognition of Polysyllabic Morphemes

Lu Zongda 陸宗達 (1905–1988) and Wang Ning 王寧 state that ‘*lianmian ci* 聯綿詞 (polysyllabic morpheme), also called *lianyu* 連語 or *lianzi* 連字, is a special disyllable in Old Chinese. It often consists of two characters that are alliterative or rhymed syllables. The development of polysyllabic morpheme is often accompanied by regular phonetic alternation.’³²⁴ Guo Zaiyi 郭在貽 (1939–1989) remarks: ‘The so-called *lianyu* 連語 denotes using two syllables to express one word. In other words, it is simply a disyllable that cannot be split into two morphemes. A polysyllabic morpheme can have different written forms that use various forms to represent the same syllables.’³²⁵

Duan and Wang made similar statements about polysyllabic morphemes. For example, in the *Shuowen*, under the character *yun* 壺, Xu noted that 壺 means ‘good or bad luck is in the pot’ (*yi*yun 壺壺). Duan annotated that ‘the combination of alliterative or rhymed syllables actually denotes one word.’³²⁶ Under the character *yi* 嬰, Duan noted that ‘the word *yini* 嬰媿 (easy-going of a newborn child) consists of two characters that cannot be separated.’³²⁷ Under the character *xie* 絺, Xu noted that 絺 denotes ‘decorations of the emperor’s carriage’ (*zhengxie* 絺絺). Duan annotated that ‘*lianmian zi* should not be interpreted separately.’³²⁸ Wang noted in his *Guangya shuzheng*: ‘Generally speaking, the meaning of alliterative or rhymed syllables lies in their sound. It is clear to seek its meaning through the sound, while it is confusing to seek its meaning through the characters.’³²⁹ Wang also stated in ‘Lianyu’ from

³²⁴ Lu Zongda 陸宗達 and Wang Ning 王寧, *Xungu yu xunguxue* 訓詁與訓詁學 [Explanations of Words and Exegesis] (Shanxi: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1994), p. 90.

³²⁵ Guo Zaiyi 郭在貽 (1939–1989), *Xinbian xungu congkao* 新編訓詁叢稿 [New Compilation of Exegesis] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2010), p. 53.

³²⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 500.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 620.

³²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 664.

³²⁹ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 479.

Dushu zazhi that ‘the two characters in *lianyu* often have the same meaning and cannot be explained separately. Seeking the meaning through the characters often leads to a far-fetched interpretation and fails to grasp the meaning.’³³⁰

Although both Duan and Wang recognised the characteristics of polysyllabic morphemes, to some extent, neither of their recognitions was complete enough. Wang pointed out the misinterpretations of polysyllabic morphemes made by previous scholars, but Duan did not. For example, under the gloss ‘*chouchu* 躊躇 means *youyu* 猶豫 (to hesitate)’, Wang noted that,

嫌疑、狐疑、猶豫、躊躅，皆雙聲字。「狐疑」與「嫌疑」，一聲之轉耳。後人誤讀「狐疑」二字，以為狐性多疑，故曰「狐疑」……猶、豫俱是多疑之獸。以上諸說，具見於《水經注》《顏氏家訓》《禮記正義》及《漢書注》《文選注》《史記索隱》等書。夫雙聲之字，本因聲以見義。不求諸聲，而求諸字，固宜其說之多鑿也。³³¹

Xianyi 嫌疑, *huyi* 狐疑, *youyu* 猶豫, and *zhizhu* 躊躅 are alliterative syllables. 狐疑 and 嫌疑 [signify the same word], resulting from phonetic alternation. Later scholars often misunderstood that the reason why 狐疑 means ‘to hesitate’ is because *hu* 狐 (fox) tends to be suspicious (*yi* 疑)...Similarly, *you* 猶 (a kind of monkey) and *yu* 豫 (a kind of elephant) are both animals associated with suspicion. The above misinterpretations can be seen in ancient texts such as *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Commentary on the Water Classic), *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (Yan Family Instructions), *Liji Zhengyi* 禮記正義 (Correct Meaning of the *Book of Rites*), *Hanshu zhu* 漢書注 (Annotations on the *Book of Han*), *Wenxuan zhu* 文選注 (Annotations on the *Selections of Refined Literature*), and *Shiji suoyin* 史記索隱 (Hidden Meanings in the *Records of the Grand Historian*). These alliterative syllables should be interpreted according to sound. Explaining these words solely based on individual characters, without considering their sound values, often results in far-fetched interpretations.

Duan made similar remarks under the character *you* 猶 (a kind of monkey) in the *Shuowen*: ‘In ancient times, some words conveyed ideas through sound rather than the meaning of each character. For instance, the polysyllabic morpheme *youyu* 猶豫 is also

³³⁰ Wang Niansun 王念孫, *Dushu zazhi* 讀書雜誌 [Miscellaneous Notes on Reading Texts], punctuated and collated by Xu Yejun 徐煒君, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), p. 1026.

³³¹ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 465.

written as *youyu* 猶與 or *youyu* 允豫. All these variations connote the sense of “hesitating”.³³² Duan clarified the characteristics of polysyllabic morphemes. Nevertheless, unlike Wang, Duan did not explicitly point out the misinterpretations made by previous scholars. Instead, he quoted the misinterpretations from *Correct Meaning of the Book of Rites*, which stated that ‘猶 is a kind of monkey, and *yu* 豫 is a kind of elephant. Both are cautious and timid animals’.

In another example, under the gloss ‘*taotie* 饕餮 means being voracious or gluttonous’,

Wang explained:

貪財貪食，總謂之饕餮。饕、餮，一聲之轉。不得分貪財為「饕」，貪食為「餮」也……蓋「饕餮」本貪食之名，故其字從食，因謂貪欲無厭者為「饕餮」也。³³³

Greed for money and greed for food are both called 饕餮. 饕 and 餮 [are alliterative syllables] resulting from phonetic alternation. The word 饕餮 should not be interpreted separately, that is, 饕 means greed for money and 餮 means greed for food...It could be suggested that 饕餮 originally meant greed for food, since both characters have *shi* 食 (food) as a component. Accordingly, being greedy is also called 饕餮.

Under the character *tie* 鈇 in the *Shuowen*, Duan noted that Jia Kui 賈逵 (174–228), Fu Yu 服虔 (fl.189), and Du Yu 杜預 (222–285) all explained 饕 as ‘greed for money’ and 餮 as ‘greed for food’ in their annotations to *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*.³³⁴

Duan quoted the misinterpretations of polysyllabic morphemes but did not correct them. This is evident in another example. Under the character *yao* 窈 (obscure), Duan quoted *Mao’s Commentary* on ‘Zhounan’ from the *Book of Poetry*, which uses *you* 幽 (quiet, tranquil) to explain 窈 and *xian* 閒 (peaceful, calm) to explain 窕. He also cited the explanation in *Dialects* that ‘inner beauty is 窈; outer beauty is 窕’, which incorrectly divided the binom semantically and explained the two individual syllables separately.³³⁵ The individual syllables

³³² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 481.

³³³ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 103.

³³⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 224.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 350.

within each polysyllabic morpheme do not have a meaning of their own. Duan's inappropriate statements stem from his insufficient understanding of polysyllabic morphemes.

From the above examples, it is evident that, in some cases, Wang appeared more incisive than Duan in recognising polysyllabic morphemes. Nevertheless, Wang sometimes mixed polysyllabic morphemes with synonymous disyllabic words. For example, he included the synonymous disyllabic words such as *yibiao* 儀表 (appearance) and *yinghuo* 營惑 (deceiving) in the list of *lianyu* (polysyllabic morphemes). His definition of *lianyu* is that 'the two characters are synonymous and cannot be interpreted separately' (*Shangxia tongyi, buke fenxun* 上下同義, 不可分訓).³³⁶ However, it is contradictory that he often semantically split the binom. In his explanation of the word *lingyi* 陵夷, he explained the synonymous characters 陵 and 夷 separately, noting that the two characters both denote 'flat'.³³⁷ In his explanation of the word *kuiwu* 魁梧, he explained the characters 魁 and 梧 separately, noting that they both denote 'big'.³³⁸ Zhao Keqin commented that the so-called *lianyu* to which Wang Niansun referred are different from polysyllabic morphemes. They are actually synonymous disyllabic words (*tongyi fuyin ci* 同義複音詞).³³⁹ This showed that Wang lacked a thorough understanding of the characteristics of polysyllabic morphemes either, as he blurred the distinction between polysyllabic morphemes and synonymous disyllabic words.

3.3.2.4. Method of Judging Loan Characters

Duan's judgment of loan characters is based on orthograph, referring to the original form and meaning as explained in the *Shuowen*. The *Shuowen* is a dictionary of graphology that primarily aims to elucidate the original meaning of a character through its graphic form. Duan

³³⁶ Wang Niansun, *Dushu zazhi*, punctuated and collated by Xu Yejun, vol. 2, p. 1026.

³³⁷ Ibid, p. 1028.

³³⁸ Ibid, p. 1033.

³³⁹ See Zhao Keqin's *Gudai hanyu cihuixue*, p. 54.

considered the original meaning presented in the *Shuowen* as the standard for determining the extended and borrowed meanings of a character. He noted under the character *quan* 鬣:

凡說字必用其本義。凡說經必因文求義，則於字或取本義，或取引伸、假借、有不可得而必者矣。故許於《毛傳》有直用其文者，凡毛、許說同是也。有相近而不同者，如毛曰「鬣好兒」，許曰「髮好兒」；毛曰「飛而下」曰頡，許曰「直項也」是也。此引伸之說也。有全違者，如毛曰「匪文章貌」，許曰「器似竹匱」；毛曰「干，澗也」，許曰「犯也」是也。此假借之說也。經傳有假借，字書無假借。

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Every time [Xu Shen] explains a character, he must reference its original meaning. Whenever he interprets the classics, he relies on the written words to discern their meaning. In ancient texts, the original meaning of a character is sometimes used, while other times the extended or borrowed meanings are employed. Xu Shen directly quotes *Mao's Commentary* when his explanation aligns precisely with Mao's. At times, Xu's explanation may be similar but not identical to Mao's. For example, Mao explains *quan* 鬣 as 'fine', whereas Xu explains it as 'fine growth of hair'; Mao explains *jie* 頡 as 'flying upward', whereas Xu explains it as 'neck sticking out'. This (i.e., Mao's explanation) represents the extended meaning. Occasionally, Xu's explanation differs completely from Mao's. For example, Mao explains *fei* 匪 as 'rich with literary grace', while Xu explains it as 'bamboo basket'; Mao explains *gan* 干 as 'valley' (*jian* 澗), while Xu explains it as 'to offend'. This is phonetic borrowing. Phonetic borrowing occurs in ancient texts, while the *Shuowen* does not address phonetic borrowing.'

Duan sharply distinguished between the explanation of a character based on its graphic form in the *Shuowen* and the specific meaning of the character in ancient texts. Mao's explanations of 鬣 and 頡 refer to their extended meanings, while Xu's explanations are derived from their original meanings based on their graphic forms. Therefore, Duan noted that the Mao's and Xu's explanations are similar yet different. Mao's explanation of 匪 refers to its borrowed use for 斐 (rich with literary grace), whereas Xu's explanation of 匪 as 'vessel' stems from the original meaning based on its graphic form. Therefore, Duan observed that the two explanations are completely different. This pattern also applies to 干. Mao's explanation of 干 as 'valley' refers to its borrowed use for 澗, while Xu's explanation of 干 as 'to offend' is grounded in its graphic form. Duan concluded that the borrowed use of a character occurs in ancient texts, in contrast to the *Shuowen*, which primarily focuses on the original meaning

³⁴⁰ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 430.

of characters.

Huang Kan once explained the relationship between form, sound, and meaning in terms of the original, extended, and borrowed meanings. He posited that when the meaning, form, and sound of a character are completely consistent with each other, this represents the original meaning; when the sound remains the same, and the meaning is extended but there is no relation with its graphic form, this denotes the extended meaning; when the character has no connection with the graphic form or meaning, and the sound remains the same, this signifies the borrowed meaning.³⁴¹

Duan's judgement of loan character is based on the meaning of the orthograph. For example, Duan annotated under the character *luo* 零 that '零, with the classifier *yu* 雨 (rain), is the orthograph for the meaning of "falling (of the rain)". Presently, the character *luo* 落 (withering, dropping) is used, while 零 is obsolete.'³⁴² Similarly, Duan annotated under the character *dun* 惇 that 'the orthograph for the meaning of "being honest or sincere" should be 惇, with the classifier *xin* 心 (heart-mind). Presently, it is often written as 敦, which originally means "feeling of resentment and enmity".'³⁴³

On the other hand, Wang's judgement of the loan character is based on the sound identity and interchangeable use of characters in ancient texts, without considering the orthograph in the *Shuowen*. The orthograph judged by Wang is determined by the common use of a character in ancient texts, rather than its graphic form. For instance, in *Guangya shuzheng*, for the explanation of *dun* 惇 under the gloss 'xinye 信也' (being trustworthy), Wang noted: 'In *Dialects*, 惇 is explained as "being trustworthy". In the sentence "*shixin mindun, gongpu*

³⁴¹ Huang Zhuo, *Huang Kan wenzi shengyun xungu biji*, p. 183. The original Chinese text is: '凡字於形、音、義三者完全相當，謂之本義。於字之聲音相當，意義相因，而於字形無關者，謂之引申義。於字之聲音相當，而形、義皆無關者，謂之假借義。'

³⁴² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 578.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 507.

shangque 士信民敦，工璞商慤” (Scholars are trustworthy. Farmers are sincere. Artisans are simple. Traders are honest) from the *Book of Rites of the Elder Dai*, “Wang yan”, 敦 is equivalent to 惇.’³⁴⁴ In *Dushu zazhi*, ‘Xunzi’, under the gloss of ‘*dunmu yan* 敦慕焉’ (to make efforts), Wang noted: ‘敦 and 惇 can be used interchangeably in ancient scripts.’³⁴⁵ Wang did not clarify which was the orthograph and which was the loan character for the meaning of ‘being trustworthy’ in relation to 敦 and 惇. He simply noted ‘to be used interchangeably’ to describe the relationship between the two characters in ancient texts.

3.4. Duan Yucai and the Other Three *Shuowen* Specialists

Among the Qing scholars who delved into the study of the *Shuowen*, four prominent specialists stand out: Duan Yucai, Gui Fu, Wang Yun, and Zhu Junsheng. Each of these scholars had distinct characteristics, which are reflected in their respective works on the *Shuowen*. Gui Fu (1736–1805) authored *Shuowen jiezi yizheng* (Semantic Evidence for the *Shuowen jiezi*), which aimed to verify and justify the definitions of characters in the *Shuowen* by citing quotations from a wide array of ancient texts. Wang Yun 王筠 (1784–1854), authored *Shuowen shili* 說文釋例 (Explanations with Examples of the *Shuowen*), elucidated the structure of *liushu* and expounded on the formats and styles of the *Shuowen*. Zhu Junsheng 朱駿聲 (1788–1858), in his *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* 說文通訓定聲 (The *Shuowen* Rearranged and Studied According to Semantic and Phonetic Affinities), conducted an extensive study of the meaning and sound of characters based on the *Shuowen*. This book is organised according to ancient rhymes, highlighting Old Chinese phonology. Characters with the same phonetic elements are grouped under each rhyme. Under each character, the original meaning is listed alongside the extended and borrowed meanings. This meticulously

³⁴⁴ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 55.

³⁴⁵ Wang Niansun, *Dushu zazhi*, vol. 4, p. 1716.

structured layout effectively illustrates the etymological connections between characters sharing similar pronunciations.

With regards to certain terms in the *Shuowen*, the four *Shuowen* specialists offer different interpretations. For instance, the term ‘A...从 X 从 Y, Y 亦聲’ (the character A is composed of X and Y, Y also indicates the sound) frequently occurs in Xu Shen’s character explanations. Duan Yucai suggested that if a character is composed of X and Y, Y also indicates the sound, this character is constructed based on both combining intentions and shaping sound principles.

For example:

Shuowen: 吏，治人者也。从一，从史，史亦聲。

Li 吏 means the person who administers (*zhi* 治) others. The character is composed of *yi* 一 (one) and *shi* 史 (official historian). 史 also stands for the sound.

Duanzhu: 治與吏同在第一部。此亦以同部疊韻為訓也……凡言亦聲者，會意兼形聲也。凡字有用六書之一者，有兼六書之二者。³⁴⁶

吏 and 治 both belong to the first rhyme group (*zhi* 之) in Duan’s phonological system of Old Chinese. Thus, 吏 /*ljəgh/ is interpreted by a rhymed syllable (as *zhi* 治 /*drjəgh/)...All instances where ‘the component also stands for the sound’ indicate that the character is constructed based on both the principles of combining intentions (*huiyi*) and shaping sound (*xingsheng*).³⁴⁷ Some characters are constructed by one principle of *liushu*, while others are concurrently constructed by two principles of *liushu*.

Duan suggested that Xu had omitted the words ‘*yisheng* 亦聲’ (the component also stands for the sound) under the characters which Duan thought should belong to the category of ‘亦聲’. For such characters, Duan noted that they are either ‘*huiyi bao xingsheng* 會意包形聲’ (The principles of character construction encompass both *huiyi* and *xingsheng*), or ‘*xingsheng bao huiyi* 形聲包會意’ (The principles of character construction encompass both *xingsheng* and *huiyi*), or ‘*huiyi jian xingsheng* 會意兼形聲’ (The character is constructed

³⁴⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 319.

³⁴⁷ *Huiyi* 會意 (associative compound) and *xingsheng* 形聲 (phonetic compound) are two of the Six Principles of Character Formation. *Huiyi* refers to associative compound which combines two or more simple graphs to create a new character and enables the reader to understand the meaning by analysing its components. *Xingsheng* refers to semantic-phonetic character which consists of semantic and phonetic elements of form and sound.

based on both the principles of *huiyi* and *xingsheng*), or ‘*xingsheng jian huiyi* 形聲兼會意’ (The character is constructed based on both the principles of *xingsheng* and *huiyi*).³⁴⁸

Wang Yun shared a similar perspective with Duan. In his *Shuowen judou* 說文句讀 (Philological Studies of the Syntax of the Explanation of Characters in the *Shuowen*), Wang underscored that ‘*yisheng* 亦聲 indicates the phonetic element’s dual contribution to sound and meaning (*Yisheng huxiang bei* 義聲互相備), highlighting both the semantic and phonetic functions.

For example:

Shuowen: 政，正也。從支從正，正亦聲。

Zheng 政 is explained as ‘proper or upright’. It is comprised of *pu* 支 (to tap, to beat) with *zheng* 正 (upright). 正 also stands for the sound.

Shuowen judou: 義聲互相備。³⁴⁹

It (the component 正) represents both sound and meaning.

Modern scholars generally concur with Duan’s and Wang’s interpretations. William G. Boltz commented that in cases like the form ‘A...从X从Y, Y亦聲’, Xu Shen seems to be attributing a dual role to Y, suggesting a simultaneous phonetic and semantic function, in a way that he refrains from doing in the many cases of straight forward *xingsheng* analyses.³⁵⁰

However, Gui Fu held a different viewpoint. In his *Shuowen jiezi yizheng*, Gui noted: ‘The term “*yisheng* 亦聲” (Y also denotes sound) suggests that the phonetic element Y belongs to the five hundred and forty classifiers in the *Shuowen*.’³⁵¹

For example:

³⁴⁸ The terms of 會意包形聲, 形聲包會意, 會意兼形聲, and 形聲兼會意 all indicate that the characters are constructed using both the principles of ‘*huiyi*’ and ‘*xingsheng*’. In essence, this means that the phonetic element of the character carries meaning.

³⁴⁹ Wang Yun, *Shuowen judou*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 217, p. 47.

³⁵⁰ William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 154.

³⁵¹ Gui Fu 桂馥 (1736–1805), *Shuowen jiezi yizheng* 說文解字義證 [Semantic Evidence for the *Shuowen jiezi*], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Continuation of the Compete Library of the Four Branches of Literature), vol. 209 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2002), p. 4.

Shuowen: 胖，半體肉也，一曰廣肉。从半，从肉，半亦聲。

Pang 胖 is defined as ‘half body [of a sacrificial animal]’ and also as ‘big flesh’. It is comprised of *ban* 半 (half) and *rou* 肉 (flesh). 半 also represents the sound.

Shuowen jiezi yizheng: 半亦聲者，從本部得聲，故曰亦聲。³⁵²

The phonetic element 半 is one of the (five hundred and forty) classifiers in the *Shuowen*. Hence, Xu explained that ‘半 also represents the sound’.

Similar statements by Gui can be found in his comments on characters such as *bie* 𠂔 (to differentiate) under the classifier *ba* 八 (to part), *gou* 筍 (a curved bamboo basket used to catch fish) under the classifier *gou* 句 (curved), *dan* 單 (great) under the classifier *xuan* 囗 (clamouring), and so forth.

Next, I will primarily discuss the characteristics of Duan Yucai’s and Gui Fu’s engagement with the *Shuowen*, as the contrast between them is more obvious. The *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 (Draft History of Qing) states:

馥與段玉裁生同時，同治《說文》，學者以桂、段並稱，而兩人兩不相見，書亦未見，亦異事也……段氏之書，聲義兼明，而尤邃於聲；桂氏之書，聲義並及，而尤博於義。³⁵³

Gui Fu and Duan Yucai were contemporary scholars. They both studied the *Shuowen*. Together they were called Gui and Duan by contemporaries. It is strange, however, that they never met each other or read each other’s works...Duan’s book clarified both sound and meaning and was particularly insightful about sound. Gui’s book covered both sound and meaning and was especially comprehensive on meaning.

The primary difference between these two scholars is that Duan was well-versed in historical phonology and skilfully applied his knowledge of historical phonology to the study of the *Shuowen*. He synthetically elaborated on the interrelationship between the form, sound, and meaning of characters. Gui Fu, on the other hand, emphasised examples of meanings from ancient texts. In his *Shuowen jiezi yizheng*, Gui provided abundant, well organised citations from various ancient texts solely to illuminate Xu Shen’s explanations of characters. It is excellent for its inclusive illustrative quotations, which are arranged in a certain sequence

³⁵² Gui Fu, *Shuowen jiezi yizheng*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 209, p. 113.

³⁵³ Zhao Erxun, *Qingshigao*, vol. 43, p. 13230.

and are important for clarifying the meanings of the characters.

Additionally, Duan was self-confident and had developed his own system. He proposed many original views on word glosses. Gui, however, simply collected quotations from ancient texts without contributing any original ideas. Gui presented examples from ancient texts to support and complement Xu Shen's explanations, thus giving readers a thorough understanding of the meanings of the characters in the *Shuowen*.³⁵⁴ He Jiuying remarks that the *Duanzhu* is superior to Gui's *Shuowen jiezi yizheng*, whether in academic standard or practical value.³⁵⁵ Zhang Taiyan commented that the *Duanzhu*, when compared with Gui Fu's and Wang Yun's works on the *Shuowen*, is unsurpassed in its excellence.³⁵⁶

In comparison to the works of the other three *Shuowen* specialists, the *Duanzhu* represents the integration of form, sound, and meaning. Duan's method of applying historical phonology to ancient glosses is similar to Zhu Junsheng's *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng*, which adds the extended and borrowed meanings of characters by using sound as a link. Duan's approach of seeking meaning through graphic form is similar to that of Gui Fu (*Shuowen jiezi yizheng*) and Wang Yun (*Shuowen judou*), which emphasise the graphic form of the characters. In terms of Duan's insights into the basic styles and general rules of the *Shuowen*, they complement Wang Yun's *Shuowen shili* from a different perspective. In general, *Shuowen jiezi yizheng* aims to explain meaning. *Shuowen shili* and *Shuowen judou* are good at explaining graphic form. *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* emphasises sound and meaning. The *Duanzhu* is the most comprehensive, incorporating the perspectives of form, sound, and

³⁵⁴ Zhao Erxun, *Qingshigao*, vol. 43, p. 13230. The original Chinese text is: '段氏勇於自信，自成一
家之言，故破字創義為多；桂氏專佐許說，發揮旁通，令學者引申貫注，自得其義之所歸。'

³⁵⁵ He Jiuying, 'Qianjia shidai de yuyanxue', *Beijing daxue xuebao* 1 (1984): 79.

³⁵⁶ Zhang Taiyan, *Guogu lunheng*, p. 9.

meaning.³⁵⁷

3.5 Distinctive Features of Duan Yucai's Research

3.5.1 Ingenuity in the Study of Historical Phonology

Based upon the research of Gu Yanwu and Jiang Yong on rhyme groups, Duan discovered additional distinctions in Old Chinese phonology, dividing ancient rhymes into seventeen groups. He extracted the *zhi* 之 /*-əg/ and *zhi* 職 /*-ək/ groups and the *zhi* 支 /*-ig/ and *xi* 錫 /*-ik/ groups from Group Two of Gu Yanwu and Jiang Yong's analysis. He also recognised *hou* 候 /*-ug/ as a separate group (his Group Four); Gu Yanwu had combined this group with *yu* 魚 /*-ag/, while Jiang Yong combined it with *you* 幽 /*-əgw/. Furthermore, Duan recognised the distinction between *zhen* 真 /*-in/ and *wen* 文 /*-ən/ (his Group Twelve and Thirteen), which had hitherto been assigned to the same group (Jiang Yong's Group Four, part of Gu Yanwu's Group Four). As a result, he established a system of seventeen rhyme groups.³⁵⁸ Duan meticulously marked the ancient rhyme of each character in his annotations to the *Shuowen*, systematically correlating rhyme groups with the writing system, thereby linking historical phonology and palaeography. This approach facilitated the detection of etymological links between words through sound.

While scholars before Duan were engaged in the study of ancient rhymes, rhyming evidence was only available for a minority of characters, and rhymes did not provide information about initials. Duan was the first to discover phonetic compounds, where the majority of words are written with a phonetic element, offering a more comprehensive evidence based for reconstructing Old Chinese. He observed that characters sharing the same

³⁵⁷ Hu Qiguang, *Zhongguo xiaoxue shi*, p. 254.

³⁵⁸ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p. 160.

phonetic component, as a general rule, could rhyme in the system revealed in the *Book of Poetry*.³⁵⁹ Additionally, Duan proposed:

一聲可諧萬字，萬字而必同部。同聲必同部。³⁶⁰

One phonetic element can harmonise ten thousand characters; but the ten thousand characters must be in the same rhyme group. Characters with the same phonetic element must be in the same rhyme group’.

Using this principle, almost all characters can be classified into rhyme groups. Duan’s ground-breaking achievement introduced a new approach to phonological research and influenced later scholars. By utilising both early rhymes and phonetic patterns in the writing system, Qing scholars were able to identify words in classical texts that may have been confused or written in nonstandard ways during textual transmission.³⁶¹

Another Duan’s contribution was his arrangement of rhyme groups according to their phonological proximity to one another, largely determined by irregular cross-rhyming or exceptional use of phonetic components in the script.³⁶² His rearrangement of the order of ancient rhyme groups enabled later scholars to focus more on the relationship between the pronunciations of ancient rhymes and their similarities with one another. Moreover, Duan was the first to systematically document euphony in Chinese prose. In his ‘*Liushu yinyunbiao*’, he added to his lists of rhyme words in the *Book of Poetry* the rhyme words in passages from the Chinese classics of ritual, philosophy and history (collectively called the *qunjing* 群經). Duan was followed by Wang Niansun, who included rhymed phrases from the early anthology of poetry *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) along with those from the *Book of Poetry* and selected Chinese classics, and half a century later by Jiang Yougao, who compiled his own lists of rhymed phrases from the above corpora and from a variety of other early texts, including Tang

³⁵⁹ Jerry Norman, *Chinese*, p. 61.

³⁶⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 825. Translation quoted from William H. Baxter’s *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p. 161.

³⁶¹ William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 2.

³⁶² Jerry Norman, *Chinese*, p. 61.

dynasty poetry.³⁶³

All of Duan's major phonological works, mentioned above, are recorded in his 'Liushu yinyun biao', which represents his achievements in historical phonology in addition to his major contributions to the study of the *Shuowen*. His revolutionary insights into historical phonology profoundly influenced later studies of Old Chinese phonology.

3.5.2 Illustration of the Rationale behind *Yinsheng qiuyi*

Duan possessed a clear theoretical understanding of the method of 'seeking semantics from phonetics'. He asserted that sound played a pivotal role in connecting the meaning and form of a character. Duan noted:

聖人之制字，有義而後有音，有音而後有形。學者之考字，因形以得其音，因音以得其義。治經莫重於得義，得義莫切於得音。³⁶⁴

When sages created characters, meanings preceded sounds, and sounds preceded forms. When scholars examined characters, they derived the sounds [of the characters] from their forms and their meanings from their sounds. The study of classical texts emphasised the acquisition of meanings. The acquisition of meanings emphasised the mastery of sounds.

Duan's assertion underscores the central role of sound from the perspective of character creation and character study. From Duan's statements, it is not difficult to deduce that language appeared much earlier than the writing system to convey ideas. Characters were later created to record language. Therefore, thoughts and ideas were conveyed by sound before the creation of writing systems. It is evident that Duan's linguistic view went through different stages in the development of Chinese language and characters. However, Duan's view that sound came after meaning is controversial from the perspective of modern linguistics. Modern linguistics contend that, in terms of the origin of language, there was no

³⁶³ Jeffrey R. Tharsen, *Chinese Euphonics: Phonetic Patterns, Phonorhetoric and Literary Artistry in Early Chinese Narrative Texts*. PhD dissertation, p. 6.

³⁶⁴ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 1.

necessary coordination between sound and meaning, since there were homonyms with different meanings and synonymous words with different sounds. Nevertheless, Duan's statements suggest that sound and meaning were already combined in language before characters appeared. Therefore, meaning should be sought through sound. After characters were created, form, sound, and meaning should be considered synthetically.

Duan adopted his teacher Dai Zhen's idea that 'gloss and sound conform to each other' and developed it theoretically. He proposed many principles regarding the connection between sound and meaning, such as 'sound and meaning spring from the same source. Therefore, the phonetic element is often close to the overall meaning of the character' (*Sheng yu yi tongyuan, gu xiasheng zhi pianpang duoyu ziyi xiangjin* 聲與義同源，故諧聲之偏旁多與字義相近);³⁶⁵ 'explore sound through form, while explore meaning through sound' (*Yinxing yi deyin, yinyin yi deyi* 因形以得其音，因音以得其義);³⁶⁶ 'examine sound and meaning through form' (*Yinxing yikao yin yu yi* 因形以考音與義); 'meaning lies in sound' (*Yi cunhu yin* 義存乎音);³⁶⁷ 'the meaning of a character is invariably contained in its sound' (*Fan zi zhiyi, bi dezhu zi zhisheng* 凡字之義，必得諸字之聲);³⁶⁸ 'seek semantics from phonetics' (*Yiyin qiuyi* 以音求義);³⁶⁹ 'homonyms often have similar meanings' (*Fan tongsheng, duo tongyi* 凡同聲，多同義).³⁷⁰ Duan also put these theories into practice in his annotations to the *Shuowen*. He used sound as a key to decipher loan characters, link potential cognate words, and clarify the derivation of characters. He systematised and theorised the method of *yinsheng qiuyi*, marking a critical turning point in exegesis during the Qing dynasty.

³⁶⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 2.

³⁶⁶ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 1.

³⁶⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 22.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 717.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 455.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 101.

3.5.3 Synthetic Application of Seeking Meaning through Form and Seeking Meaning through Sound

Duan stated that:



小學有形、有音、有義，三者互相求，舉一可得其二。有古形、有今形，有古音、有今音，有古義、有今義，六者互相求，舉一可得其五。³⁷¹

Philology has form, has sound, and has meaning (as its focus). These three are to be sought in mutual relations; when you get hold of one (of the three), you can obtain the other two. There are ancient forms and modern forms, ancient sounds and modern sounds, ancient meanings and modern meanings. These six are to be sought in mutual relations; when you get hold of one (of the six), you can obtain the other five.

‘Seeking the three in mutual relations’ is aimed at clarifying the interrelationships among form, sound, and meaning, while ‘seeking the six in mutual relations’ is intended to explore the historical development of form, sound, and meaning. Duan’s argument that ‘form, sound, and meaning form an integral whole’ encompasses both characters and language. He not only delved into the original meaning of a character through its graphic form but also delved into its etymology through sound. Duan synthetically combined the approach of seeking meaning through the form of the character with that of seeking meaning through the sound of the word. In doing so, he rectified Xu Shen’s omissions, corrected Xu’s mistakes, and rendered the *Shuowen* a more comprehensive dictionary covering graphology, phonology, and exegesis. The following are examples of Duan’s synthetic application of seeking meaning through both form and sound in the *Duanzhu*.

In the *Shuowen*, the character *qing* 慶 means ‘to congratulate others’. It is composed of *xin* 心 (heart-mind), *sui* 夂 (to go slowly), and abbreviated *lu* 鹿 (deer). Duan annotated: ‘*Qing* 慶 and *he* 賀 are mutually explanatory characters. The character *he* 賀 has *bei* 貝 (shell, money) as a component. Thus, 賀 means to celebrate by sending a gift. The character *qing* 慶 has *lu* 鹿 (deer) as a component. Thus, 慶 also means to celebrate by sending a gift (i.e., deer

³⁷¹ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 1.

hide), and its extended meaning is ‘to congratulate others’.³⁷² However, the bronze inscription of 慶 is written as , which suggests that the tail of the deer is altered to 夂 in the small seal script.³⁷³ Neither Xu nor Duan saw the ancient scripts earlier than the small seal script, which led to their misinterpretation of the construction of 慶. In the *Shuowen*, the character *shui* 睡 means ‘dozing off’. It is composed of *mu* 目 (eye) and *chui* 垂 (drooping). Duan annotated: ‘*Muchui* 目垂 means that the eyelids are drooping. It happens when people are sitting.’³⁷⁴ In the *Shuowen*, the ancient script of the character *liang* 梁 (a bridge over the water) is written as  composing of *shui* 水 (water), two *mu* 木 (wood) and a horizontal line. Duan annotated: ‘Since the water is wide, the bridge is built by combining the beams. The horizontal line represents the connection of the beams.’³⁷⁵

In addition to explaining the meaning of a character through its form, Duan explored semantics from phonetics. He often used the source-indicating function of the phonetic element to demonstrate the etymological meaning of a character. For example, the character *chun* 春 is explained as ‘to push’. It is composed of *cao* 艸 (grass), *ri* 日 (sun), and *tun* 屯 (difficult). 屯 also serves as a phonetic element. Duan annotated: ‘The phonetic element 屯 mimics a plant struggling to break through the earth. Thus, 春 is composed by the principles of both *huiyi* and *xingsheng*.’³⁷⁶ Duan also used the phonetic element to link cognate words. For instance, he annotated under the character *zhen* 袵 (embroidered garments) that ‘characters that use “*zhen* 袵” to indicate pronunciation are often glossed as “thick or dense”.’³⁷⁷ Duan was adept at using the semantic function of the phonetic element and placed

³⁷² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 509.

³⁷³ Ji Xusheng 季旭升, *Shuowen xinzheng* 說文新證 [New Evidence for the *Shuowen*] (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2014), p. 792.

³⁷⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 135.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 270.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 48.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 393.

emphasis on a group of characters rather than a single character. This helped him to systematically analyse the meanings of characters in a comprehensive way.

3.5.4 Diachronic View of Language Development

Duan clearly acknowledged that language changes both historically and geographically. He meticulously examined various forms of the same word across different texts, tracing their connections through sound. Through this process, he discerned how changes in time and space led to variant representations in sounds and graphical forms. Duan demonstrated a keen awareness of the disparity between ancient times and his contemporary era regarding the forms, sounds, and meanings of characters. He comprehended the connection and difference between ancient forms and modern forms, ancient sounds and modern sounds, ancient meanings and modern meanings. This represents significant progress in traditional Chinese linguistics. Duan stated: ‘The so-called ancient and modern graphs (*gujin zi* 古今字) generally mean that one character is used in ancient times, while another homonym representing the same word is used in modern times’.³⁷⁸ He also noted:

凡讀經傳者，不可不知古今字。古今無定時，周為古則漢為今，漢為古則晉宋為今，隨時異用者謂之古今字。³⁷⁹

When reading ancient texts and commentaries, one should be aware of ancient and modern graphs. The terms ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ do not refer to fixed times. If the Zhou dynasty is ‘ancient’, then the Han dynasty is ‘modern’. If the Han dynasty is ‘ancient’, then the Jin and Song dynasties are ‘modern’. Different uses according to different times are called ancient and modern graphs.

When analysing the meaning of a word, Duan explored the evolution of the meaning of a character from a historical point of view, which distinguished him from other scholars. In addition to the systems of variant graphs, loan characters, and cognate words, which are also

³⁷⁸ Duan Yucan, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 50. The original Chinese text is: ‘凡言古今字者，主謂同音而古用彼，今用此異字。’

³⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 94.

presented in Wang Niansun's *Guangya shuzheng*, the *Duanzhu* specifically addresses ancient and modern graphs. The following are some of the examples.

Example 1: The character *jian* 翦 is defined as 'newly feathering' in the *Shuowen*. Duan annotated that '翦 means *qian* 前 denoting "to cut". 前 is the ancient form of 翦 and also the modern form of *qian* 前 (front).'³⁸⁰ In addition, Duan offered the following annotation under *qian* 前 (front), noting that '前, originally meaning "to cut or to clip", is later used to signify "front or preceding". Thereafter, the sense of "cutting or clipping" is assumed by 翦 which originally denotes "newly feathering".'³⁸¹ Duan demonstrated a diachronic observation of the involvement of the meanings of a series of characters 前, 翦, and 翦. He clarified the different usages of these characters in both ancient times and his present times.

Example 2: Under the character *huo* 或 in the *Shuowen*, Duan noted:

蓋或國在周時爲古今字。古文祇有或字，既乃複製國字……乃又加口而爲國。又加心爲惑，以爲疑惑當別於或。此孳乳寢多之理也。既有國字，則國訓邦，而或但訓有。³⁸²

Huo 或 (state, region) and *guo* 國 (state, region) might be ancient and modern graphs in the Zhou dynasty. In ancient scripts, there is only the character 或. 國 was created later... When the classifier *wei* 口 (to encircle) is added [to 或], 國 is formed. When the classifier *xin* 心 (heart-mind) is added [to 或], *huo* 惑 (being puzzled) is formed, aiming to differentiate the meaning for 'being puzzled' from the character 或. This illustrates the principle of character derivation. Since 國 was created, 國 is glossed as 'state', while 或 is only glossed as 'some'.

Example 3: Under the character *lü* 履 (shoes, to tread), Duan annotated: 'In ancient times, it was referred to as *lü* 履, while in modern times, it is known as *lü* 履. Similarly, it was called 履 in ancient times, but in modern times, it is termed *lü* 鞮. The nomenclature varies depending on the era.'³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 140.

³⁸¹ Ibid, p. 68.

³⁸² Ibid, p. 637.

³⁸³ Ibid, p. 407.

Example 4: In the *Shuowen*, *lian* 聯 is explained as ‘to join or to connect’ (*lian* 連). Duan annotated: ‘連 means to pull a carriage. That is to say, a man pulls a carriage. Since a man is connected to a carriage, 連 is used to denote “connection”. People in the Zhou dynasty used 聯, while people in the Han dynasty used 連. 聯 and 連 are ancient and modern graphs... This is to use the modern graph (連) to explain the ancient graph (聯).’³⁸⁴

Example 5: In the *Shuowen*, the character *yan* 厭 is explained as ‘to press’. Duan annotated: ‘Today, the character for “to press” is written as *ya* 壓...厭 is often used for *yan* 厭 which means “to dislike” and “to overindulge”. As the orthograph (厭) for “to dislike” and “to overindulge” is obsolete, the original meaning of 厭 (to press) is rarely known.’³⁸⁵ Duan also annotated under the character *yan* 厭 (to overindulge) that ‘since 厭 is used for 厭, 厭 is obsolete. 厭 and 厭 have the same sound but different meanings...厭 and 厭 are ancient and modern graphs. 厭 and 壓 are orthograph and popular graphs.’³⁸⁶

Example 6: In the *Shuowen*, the character *zeng* 曾 is explained as ‘stretched of words’. Duan annotated: ‘It could be suggested that the ancient gloss of 曾 is “actually, then” with *zideng* 子登 /tsəng/ as its *fanqie* spelling. In later times, 曾 is used to denote “once” with *caideng* 才登 /dzəng/ as its *fanqie* spelling. The latter is the present meaning and pronunciation of 曾, rather than the ancient meaning and pronunciation.’³⁸⁷

Note: It is noted in *Guangyun* that 曾 have two *fanqie* spellings: one is *zuoteng* 作滕 /tsəng/ when denoting ‘actually or then’, and the other is *zuoleng* 昨稜 /dzəng/ when denoting ‘once’.³⁸⁸ Therefore, it is evident that in Middle Chinese, 曾 had already differentiated into two sets of sounds and meanings. Accordingly, Duan’s judgment that the meaning of ‘once’,

³⁸⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 597.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 452.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 204.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 49.

³⁸⁸ Chen Pengnian 陳彭年 (961–1017), *Xinjiao songben guangyun* 新校宋本廣韻 [The Latest Proofread Expanded Rhymes of the Song Dynasty] (Taipei: Hongye wenhua, 2001), p. 201.

when pronounced as /dzəŋg/, is the present meaning and sound is debatable.

Duan's diachronic view suggests that form, sound, and meaning are always in a process of development and evolution. Hence, it is imperative to adopt a historical perspective on language and characters, meticulously scrutinising the disparities between ancient and modern forms, sounds, and meanings. This approach ensures that we avoid assessing the ancient through the lens of the modern.

3.5.5 Analogical Comparison

In his interpretation of characters, Duan not only provided a historical analysis of the diachronic development of a character's meaning but also compared and linked synonymous words in parallel. The following are some of the examples of Duan's distinction and analogy between characters.

a. Phonetic compounds with classifiers that are semantically related and share the same phonetic element exhibit similarities in sound and meaning.

Example 1: In the *Shuowen*, *yu* 踰 means 'to exceed or to transgress' (*yue* 越). Duan annotated: '越 means "to pass over or to exceed". 踰, with the classifier *zu* 足 meaning "foot", and *yu* 逾, with the classifier *chuo* 辵 meaning "to walk", are similar in sound and meaning.'

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Example 2: In the *Shuowen*, *qu* 躅, with the classifier *chi* 辵 meaning 'small step', means 'the appearance of walking'. Duan annotated: '躅 and *qu* 躅, the latter with the classifier *zu* 足 (foot), have the same sound and meaning.'³⁹⁰

b. Phonetic compounds with different classifiers but have the same phonetic element are semantically related.

³⁸⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 82.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 76.

Example 1: In the *Shuowen*, *yin* 齧 means ‘to gnaw or to bite’. Duan annotated: ‘齧 and *yin* 豮 (to gnaw, to bite), the latter with the classifier *shi* 豕 (pig), have the same sound and meaning.’³⁹¹

Example 2: In the *Shuowen*, *rong* 溶 means ‘restless’. Duan annotated: ‘It is semantically related to the character *rong* 溶, which means “overflowing with water”. Both 溶 and 溶 denote the state of turbulence and restlessness.’³⁹²

c. Distinguish between phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element but different meanings.

For example: In the *Shuowen*, *he* 龢 means ‘harmonious’. Duan annotated: ‘The character *tiao* 調, with the classifier *yan* 言 (speech), means “coordinated” (龢). 龢 and *he* 和 (to follow, to echo), the latter with the classifier *kou* 口 (mouth), have the same sound (龢 and 和 share the same phonetic element *he* 禾) but different meanings. In ancient texts, 和 is often borrowed for 龢.’³⁹³

d. Homonyms with different forms have similar meanings.

For example: In the *Shuowen*, *xiao* 囂 means ‘noisy or loud’. Duan annotated: ‘Under the classifier *qian* 欠 (to exhale), Xu states that “*xiao* 歛 means air rising”. 歛 /*h₁jagw/ and 囂 /*h₁jagw/ have the same sound and similar meaning.’³⁹⁴

e. Words can share a broad similarity while exhibiting distinct nuances in a narrow sense.

Example 1: In the *Shuowen*, *ya* 牙 is explained as back teeth. Duan annotated: ‘In a broad sense, both 牙 and 齒 mean teeth. In a narrow sense, the front teeth behind the lips are called 齒, while the back teeth at the jaw are called 牙.’³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 80.

³⁹² Ibid, p. 710.

³⁹³ Ibid, p. 86.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 87.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 81.

Example 2: In the *Shuowen*, *xiang* 祥 is explained as good luck or auspicious. Duan annotated: ‘In a broad sense, bad luck or disaster is also called 祥. In a narrow sense, good luck is called 祥.’³⁹⁶

f. Distinguish synonyms by the phonetic element.

For example: *Can* 憯, *dong* 恫, and *bei* 悲 are synonyms which are generally explained as ‘pain’ in the *Shuowen*.³⁹⁷ Duan’s annotation for the character 悲 clarifies their differences. He noted: ‘憯 indicates that the pain is deep. 恫 indicates that the pain is concentrated. 悲 indicates that the pain is rising. The difference between these characters can be found in their phonetic elements.’³⁹⁸

Note: The phonetic element of *can* 憯 is *can* 瞢, which is defined in the *Shuowen* as ‘increasing’.³⁹⁹ Thus, 憯 means that the pain is getting deeper, as in the sentence ‘*yuanzhi canyu gusui* 怨之憯於骨髓’ (The resentment has penetrated deeply into the bone) from *Huainanzi*.⁴⁰⁰ The phonetic element of *dong* 恫 is *tong* 同. 同 denotes ‘together with’ and is associated with the sense of ‘gathering together’.⁴⁰¹ Therefore, 恫 indicates that the pain is concentrated. The phonetic element of 悲 is *fei* 非, which represents a pair of wings.⁴⁰² 非 is related to the idea of ‘flying’ and indicates rising. Thus, 悲 implies that the pain is increasing. Duan’s words showed that the difference between these synonyms can be perceived through their sound components. However, regarding the meaning of 非, scholars such as Ji Xusheng 季旭升 argue that according to the bronze inscription of 非, which depicts two people back to

³⁹⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 3.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 517.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 205.

⁴⁰⁰ *Huainan honglie jie* 淮南鴻烈解 [The Great and Mighty Explanation of Huainan], comp. by Liu An 劉安 (179–ca.122 BCE), notes by Gao You 高誘 (fl.180 CE), ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 848. p. 727.

⁴⁰¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 357.

⁴⁰² *Ibid*, p. 588.

back, the original meaning of 非 is ‘to deviate’, therefore, it has nothing to do with flying.⁴⁰³

Some of Duan’s distinctions between synonymous words are incorrect. For example, under the character 嘆, he annotated that ‘the exclamation of 嘆 is sad, while the exclamation of 歎 is happy.’⁴⁰⁴ Both Wang Li and Jiang Shaoyu point out that 歎 and 嘆 are two forms of the same word with no difference between them.⁴⁰⁵ 歎, with the classifier *qian* 欠 (to exhale), and 嘆, with the classifier *kou* 口 (mouth), are variant graphs of the same word for ‘emitting the breath with strong feeling’, as they share the same phonetic element and their classifiers are semantically related.

3.5.6 Examining Ancient Texts through Characters and Conversely Examining Characters through Ancient Texts

In the *Duanzhu*, Duan utilised the *Shuowen* to study philology and employed philology to analyse ancient texts. Duan not only explicated characters through ancient texts but also interpreted ancient texts through rigorous examination of characters. To fully grasp the meanings of a word, it must be contextualised within a broader textual framework. In the *Duanzhu*, Duan often teased out the original, extended, and borrowed meanings of a character by situating it within ancient texts. His approach involved analysing a character at multiple linguistic levels, including its individual form, its lexical connections with other words, its usage within a sentence in ancient texts. Moreover, Duan applied his philological knowledge and the research findings of the *Shuowen* to decode the meaning of words in ancient texts. In this way, his annotations to the characters and classical studies supported each other. When deciphering the meaning of a word in his annotations, Duan did not restrict himself to

⁴⁰³ Ji Xusheng, *Shuowen xinzheng*, p. 825.

⁴⁰⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 61.

⁴⁰⁵ Jiang Shaoyu, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 29.

dictionary definitions, nor did he blindly adhere to the interpretations of previous commentators. Instead, he consulted various philological sources including dictionaries, classical texts, commentaries, and dialects, constructing an objective philological foundation while considering textual contexts. The *Duanzhu* transcended mere collation. He explored broadly into ancient texts and meticulously researched from individual characters and words to the general rules of ancient texts. His insights into exegesis are embedded within his annotations, rendering this work extensive in scope and profound in thought.

3.5.7 Revealing the Basic Styles of the *Shuowen*

In the *Duanzhu*, Duan not only used ancient texts and commentaries to annotate the *Shuowen* but also specifically utilised the *Shuowen* itself to provide annotations.⁴⁰⁶ Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 (1904–1995) notes that one of Duan’s contributions in the *Duanzhu* was to clarify the styles of the *Shuowen*. Zhou points out that there are up to fifty or sixty illustrations of the basic styles of the *Shuowen* in the *Duanzhu*.⁴⁰⁷ According to Hu Qiguang, Duan revealed nearly four hundred patterns in the *Shuowen*, covering various aspects of philology,⁴⁰⁸ including the editorial pattern, technical terms, and the analysis of the relationship between form, sound, and meaning. Duan noted:

凡此書經後人妄竄，蓋不可數計。獨其義例精密，迄今將二千年，猶可推尋，以復其舊。⁴⁰⁹

Since the *Shuowen* was written, there have been many falsifications by later scholars in the process of transmission and transcription. Nevertheless, the basic patterns in the *Shuowen* are sophisticated. Even after two thousand years, these rules can still be deduced to restore the *Shuowen*.

⁴⁰⁶ Duan Yucui, *Jingyunlou ji*, p. 409. The original Chinese text is: ‘以經注許，以鄭注許，而尤要在以許注許。’

⁴⁰⁷ Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 (1904–1995), *Wenxue ji* 問學集 [Collection of Essays on Learning], (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), pp.853–855.

⁴⁰⁸ Hu Qiguang, *Zhongguo xiaoxue shi*, p. 247.

⁴⁰⁹ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 1.

The following are some of the examples of the basic styles of the *Shuowen* that Duan induced.

In terms of sequence, Duan noted:

凡部之先後，以形之相近為次。凡每部中字之先後，以義之相引為次。⁴¹⁰

The sequence of the classifier entries is according to the closeness of the forms of the characters. The sequence of the characters in each entry is according to the meanings of the characters.

In terms of Xu's explanation, Duan noted:

凡篆一字，先訓其義，若「始也，顛也」是；次釋其形，若「從某，某聲」是；次釋其音，若「某聲」及「讀若某」是。⁴¹¹

Under each character, Xu Shen first explains its meaning, such as '(it means) beginning and head'; next, Xu explains its graphic form, such as 'it is comprised of A, with B as its phonetic'; finally, Xu explains its sound, such as 'its pronunciation is A, or it reads like B'.

In terms of sound gloss, Duan specifically clarified the phonetic relationship between the glossing word and the glossed word. For instance, under Xu Shen's explanation of 'tian, dian ye 天, 顛也' (The sky means the top), Duan noted:

此以同部疊韻為訓也。凡「門，聞也」「戶，護也」「尾，微也」「髮，拔也」，皆此例。⁴¹²

This gloss utilises rhyming within the same group for explanation. It is the same case as the examples such as 'men 門 (gate) being glossed by wen 聞 (to hear)', 'hu 戶 (door eave) being glossed by hu 護 (to protect)', 'wei 尾 (tail) being glossed by wei 微 (subtle)', and 'fa 髮 (hair) being glossed by ba 拔 (to pull out)'.

More examples are presented in Chapter Five.

In terms of the specific terms, such as 'duruo 讀若' (A reads like B) and 'duwei 讀為' (A is read as B), Duan noted:

凡言讀若者，皆擬其音也。凡傳注言讀為者，皆易其字也。注經必兼茲二者，故有讀為，有讀若。讀為亦言讀曰。讀若亦言讀如。⁴¹³

'Duruo 讀若' means to depict the pronunciation of a character; 'duwei 讀為' in ancient

⁴¹⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 1.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, p. 415.

⁴¹² Ibid, p. 1.

⁴¹³ Ibid, p. 6.

commentaries means to clarify the orthograph of a loan graph. Commentaries on ancient texts must have these two cases, which are ‘*duwei* 讀爲’ and ‘*duruo* 讀若’. *Duwei* 讀爲 is also called ‘*duyue* 讀曰’. ‘*Duruo* 讀若’ is also called ‘*duru* 讀如’.

In addition, Duan used the patterns of the *Shuowen* to revise the *Shuowen*. For example, the character *chou* 疇, with the classifier *zi* 白 (nose), is explained as ‘word’ (*ciye* 詞也). Duan annotated:

說文之例，云某詞。「自」部外，吹爲詮詞，矣爲語已詞，矧爲況詞，習爲出氣詞，各爲異詞……然則「詞也」二字，非例。當作「誰詞也」三字……壁中古文字作「疇」，古字也。《爾雅》：疇、孰，誰也。字作「疇」，今字也。⁴¹⁴

As for the pattern in the *Shuowen*, it is often said that ‘it is the word for a particular use’ (*mouci* 某詞). For example, in addition to the section heading 白, *yu* 吹 is an auxiliary word (*quanci* 詮詞); *yi* 矣 is a word of the final particle (*yuyi ci* 語已詞); *shen* 矧 is a word meaning ‘besides’ (*kuangci* 況詞); *hu* 習 is a word of aspiration (*chuqi ci* 出氣詞); *ge* 各 is a word of separation (*yici* 異詞) ... Thus, the explanation of ‘*ci ye* 詞也’ (word) is not in accordance with the style [of the glosses in the *Shuowen*]. 疇 should be explained as ‘an interrogative pronoun’ (*sheici ye* 誰詞也)... The ancient script from [Confucius’] wall is written as 疇. *Erya* notes: Both *chou* 疇 and *shu* 孰 mean ‘who’. 疇 is the modern script [of 疇].

3.6. Shortcomings in Duan’s Work

In addition to acknowledging Duan’s academic rigor and scientific methodology, it is imperative to objectively assess his limitations. The following points highlight the shortcomings of Duan’s philological research.

3.6.1 Lack of Research on Initials

Qing scholars focused predominantly on ancient rhymes while did not give sufficient consideration to ancient initial consonants. Despite notable discoveries by Qian Daxin, such as the absence of labiodentals and retroflexes in Old Chinese, research on Old Chinese initials during the Qing dynasty remained inadequate.⁴¹⁵ This was primarily due to limited resources

⁴¹⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 138.

⁴¹⁵ Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804), *Shijiazhai yangxin lu* 十駕齋養新錄 [Records of Ten Days Carriage Journey Chamber’s Cultivation] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1983), pp. 101–111.

available for studying initials compared to rhymes. Sagart emphasised the need for evidence from foreign transcriptions, related words in foreign languages, and newly excavated scripts for reconstructing Old Chinese phonology.⁴¹⁶ Duan's reconstruction lacked such evidence, resulting in a gap between his time and modern research on Old Chinese phonology, especially regarding initials. With sufficient materials and convenient phonetic notation, modern scholars have developed a much more nuanced reconstruction of Old Chinese initials. They have also discovered the existence of initial clusters and their role in derivational morphology, insights that were unfathomable to Duan and his contemporaries.⁴¹⁷

The *Duanzhu* primarily emphasised rhymes in analysing the phonetic relationship between characters. His principle that 'phonetic compounds of the same series must belong to the same rhyme group' captures only part of the narrative, overlooking the significance of the initial.⁴¹⁸ Phonetic compounds of the same series must be phonetically related in the initials as well. In addition, the absence of a convenient phonetic notation during Duan's time affected the accuracy of his phonetic analysis.

3.6.2 Immature Perception of Language

Duan's approach of 'seeking semantics from phonetics' failed to fully overcome the limitations imposed by graphic form, thereby preventing him from achieving a comprehensive linguistic perspective. His incomplete recognition of polysyllabic morphemes and arbitrary statements when applying the *youwen* theory underscored this deficiency. Although there

⁴¹⁶ Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), p. 139.

⁴¹⁷ For example, the polysyllabic morpheme *jiaoluo* 角/kâk/ 落/lâk/ is derived from *jiao* 角/*klak/. Similarly, the polysyllabic morpheme *kulong* 窟/khuət/ 窿/ljung/ is derived from *kong* 孔/*klong/. The remnants of the initial cluster /*kl-/ can be seen in some polysyllabic morphemes. See Chu Chia-ning, *An Exploration of Phonology*, pp. 327-8.

⁴¹⁸ Jin Lixin 金理新, *Shanggu hanyu yinxi* 上古漢語音系 [The Phonology of Old Chinese] (Hefei: Huangshan chubanshe, 2006), p. 19.

were some cases in which Duan sought semantics from phonetics without the limitation of the phonetic element,⁴¹⁹ he did not fully adhere to this practice throughout. He often explored cognate words by reference to the phonetic element and did not take much account of cognate words whose phonetic elements are different, nor did he recognise different meanings contained in the same phonetic element.⁴²⁰ Wang Li observes that scholars such as Duan Yucai were constrained by their focus on characters and unable to adopt a broader linguistic viewpoint, limiting their discussion of cognate words.⁴²¹ Wang Li also notes in the preface to his *Tongyuan zidian* 同源字典 (Etymological Dictionary) that Qing scholars such as Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun had the ability to research cognate words. They sought glosses by examining pronunciations, which is the method of studying cognate words...But why did they not write a dictionary of cognate words or etymology? It was because they did their research from the perspective of characters, rather than from a linguistic point of view.⁴²² Wang's comments imply that scholars during the Qing dynasty were still bound by the constraints of character-centric analysis and did not fully transcend the limitations of focusing on graphic forms.

Furthermore, the technical terms used by Qing scholars were ambiguous. For instance, the term *sheng* 聲 represented different linguistic concepts including pronunciation (*shengyin* 聲音), initial (*shengmu* 聲母), tone (*shengdiao* 聲調), and phonetic element (*shengfu* 聲符). The precise linguistic concepts were still immature in the Qing dynasty. Moreover, while

⁴¹⁹ For example, in the *Shuowen*, Duan annotated under the character *piao* 獐 that it signifies 'yellowish-white cattle'. *Piao* 獐 signifies 'the bird's feathers are white'. Since *piao* 票 /*phjiagw/ and *biao* 彪 /*bragw/ are near homonyms in Old Chinese, 驃, meaning 'the yellow horse with white spots', is also related the sense of 'white'. Further examples are presented in Chapter 4.4.

⁴²⁰ Ma Jinglun 馬景倫 (1945–2011), *Duanzhu xungu yanjiu* 段注訓詁研究 [The Study of the Exegesis of the *Duanzhu*] (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), p. 312.

⁴²¹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 38. The original Chinese text is: '段玉裁他們為文字所束縛，不能從語言看問題，他們對於同源字的探討，受到了很大的局限。'

⁴²² *Ibid*, p. 1.

Duan was well aware that language changes over time, however, he lacked the crucial notion of the rules for regular sound change, such as palatalisation and the great vowel shift, which are important for reconstructing Old Chinese.

3.6.3 Limitation of Reference Materials

Modern research approaches to Old Chinese phonology encompass a diverse array of materials and methodologies that were unknown to Duan Yucai. In addition to traditional studies, which include the examination of the phonological system implied in the *Book of Poetry* and *xiesheng* series, contemporary approaches also encompass dialects, loan words, and comparative studies within the Sino-Tibetan language family, among other areas. Regarding the traditional materials with which Duan was concerned, the *Book of Poetry* provides information on rhymes rather than initials. The *xiesheng* series are the only phonological data for defining the language of the pre-Qin period. However, relying solely on these sources is insufficient. Traditional phonology, apart from the early influence of Sanskrit, largely disregarded languages other than Chinese.⁴²³

In addition, sound changes may motivate the generation of a new phonophoric that accommodates the contemporary pronunciation.⁴²⁴ Characters sharing the same phonetic element may exhibit less similarity in pronunciation due to phonetic changes over time. Accordingly, new phonetic compounds were created by analogy with existing ones, and the criteria for phonetic similarity between the phonetic element and the character would have been less stringent. As a result, the pronunciations of newly created phonetic compounds are generally less informative than earlier ones. Some characters in the standard script used

⁴²³ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p. 140.

⁴²⁴ Haeree Park, 'Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts', *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63. 4 (2009): 880.

during the Qin and Han dynasties do not represent Old Chinese phonology. Since a large number of documents from the pre-Qin period, before the unification and standardisation of the scripts, have been excavated in modern times, the scripts of these documents are more relevant to Old Chinese reconstruction than the standard sealed scripts on which previous reconstructions were largely based. The use of these excavated manuscripts has led modern scholars to a new understanding of the nature of the pre-Qin script, which is relevant to the problem of reconstructing Old Chinese. It also indicates that Duan's statement 'same phonetic, same rhyme group' (*tongsheng bi tongbu* 同聲必同部) cannot be applied indiscriminately to characters that originated at different times. The *xiesheng* relationships described in the *Shuowen* reflect Old Chinese phonology in many cases, but some of the characters are of late origin and reflect Old Chinese phonology only through the mirror of later sound changes.⁴²⁵


Baxter and Sagart provide an example in their work *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*. In the *Shuowen*, the phonetic element of *wen* 聞 is *men* 門. However, in excavated Warring States documents, 聞 (to hear) is commonly written with the character *hun* 昏 (dusk), as a phonetic loan. The use of 昏 /*m̥^su[n]/ to write 聞 /*mu[n]/ is based on the phonetic similarity of /*m-/ and /*m̥^s-/ and the presence of the same rhyme /*-u[n]/ in both words. In addition, 昏 with *er* 耳 (ear) added forms *wen* 聾, which the *Shuowen* lists as an 'ancient graph' of 聞. Early in the Old Chinese period, 門 /*m̥^sə[r]/ would not have been a proper phonetic for 聞 /*mu[n]/, because its main vowel was different; the codas were probably different as well. But as the result of later sound changes, 門 /mwon/ became a suitable phonetic for 聞/mjun/, and 昏/xwon/ would have become a less suitable phonetic. This example shows how the early script was able to adapt to these sound changes, replacing the phonetic element 昏 with the

⁴²⁵ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, pp. 343–353.


phonetic element 𠂔.⁴²⁶ Duan Yucai's principle 'same phonetic, same rhyme group' holds good, but in this case, it applies not to Old Chinese but to somewhat later period.⁴²⁷

During Duan's time, the materials on ancient scripts were very limited. Duan was unaware of the earlier forms of graphs, such as the oracle bone inscriptions and excavated pre-Qin manuscripts. As a result, he was misled by the graphic forms available at his time, which not only hindered his accurate reconstruction of Old Chinese but also led him to blindly adopt Xu Shen's erroneous explanations of some characters.

For example, Duan followed Xu Shen's explanation of the character *ding* 鼎 and regarded it as a phonetic compound with the abbreviated *zhen* 貞 as its phonetic element.⁴²⁸

According to the oracle bone inscription of 鼎, which is written as , it is evidently a pictograph.⁴²⁹ Three further examples:

Example 1: According to Xu Shen, the character *wei* 為 represents a female monkey. Duan annotated that 'the upper part of the character resembles the claws of a female monkey, while the lower part resembles the shape of a female monkey's head, eyes, body, and legs'.⁴³⁰

In the oracle bone inscription, 為 is written as ,⁴³¹ which appears to be a complex pictograph depicting a hand near the head of an elephant, a proto-form of *hui* 搆 and *hui* 麾, both meaning 'to lead or to direct'.⁴³² Due to the lack of related materials for reference, Duan did not make any revisions but made far-fetched annotation to Xu Shen's explanations.

Example 2: In the *Shuowen*, the character *ruo* 若 denotes 'to pick the edible part of

⁴²⁶ William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 63.

⁴²⁷ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p. 353.


⁴²⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 322.



⁴²⁹ Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen zidian*, p. 771.

⁴³⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 114.

⁴³¹ Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen zidian*, p. 266.

⁴³² David Prager Branner, 'Phonology in the Chinese Script and its Relationship to Early Chinese Literacy', *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar*, eds. Li Feng and David Prager Branner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), p. 113.

vegetables’. According to Duan’s annotation, 若 originally meant ‘to choose’ and was later extended to denote ‘to pick the edible part of vegetables’.⁴³³ The oracle bone inscription of 若 is written as . It is a pictograph depicting a person sitting on their feet and combing their hair,⁴³⁴ which denotes ‘smooth or soft’ and has nothing to do with ‘picking vegetables’.

Example 3: In the *Shuowen*, the character *she* 射 (to shoot) consists of *shen* 身 (body) and *cun* 寸 (inch). Duan noted that it is a *huiyi* compound. In the oracle bone inscriptions, the character is written as  or with a hand added next to the line depicting the bowstring .⁴³⁵ This graph is actually a single unit in which the relative positions of the elements are part of the depiction. The original oracle bone inscription could perhaps have been normalised as 𠄎. Therefore, 射 in its original form was a complex pictograph, but it has been normalised as a false compound graph.⁴³⁶

The faulty explanations by Xu Shen and Duan Yucai can be attributed to the lack of certain crucial materials available to them. They were not aware of the scripts earlier than the seal scripts and the ancient scripts in the *Shuowen*.

3.6.4. Ambiguity about the Phonetic Condition of Phonetic Borrowing

Regarding the phonetic condition required for phonetic borrowing, Duan illustrated that ‘phonetic borrowing *must* occur between homonyms belonging to the same rhyme group’ (*Fan jiajie bi tongbu tongyin* 凡假借必同部同音);⁴³⁷ ‘phonetic borrowing occurs more often between characters belonging to the same rhyme group than between those belonging to different rhyme groups’ (*Jiajie quzhu tongbu zhe duo, quzhu yibu zhe shao* 假借取諸同部者

⁴³³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 44.

⁴³⁴ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 1, p. 367.

⁴³⁵ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 3, p. 2607.

⁴³⁶ David Prager Branner, ‘Phonology in the Chinese Script and its Relationship to Early Chinese Literacy’, *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar*, eds. Li Feng and David Prager Branner, p. 95.

⁴³⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 1.

多，取諸異部者少)；⁴³⁸ ‘the characters in a phonetic borrowing relationship are often either rhymed syllables or alliterative syllables’ (*Fan jiajie duo dieyun, huo shuangsheng ye* 凡假借多疊韻，或雙聲也)。⁴³⁹ These statements appear sporadically in the *Duanzhu*. Duan also applied these principles in his evaluation of phonetic borrowing when judging the phonetic relationship between the presumed orthograph and loan graph.

However, Duan’s principles regarding the phonetic condition of phonetic borrowing are inconsistent and self-contradictory. He proposed that ‘phonetic borrowing must occur between homonyms belonging to the same rhyme group’,⁴⁴⁰ but he also referred to the sound borrowing between characters belonging to different rhyme groups. For example, under the character *po* 坡 in the *Shuowen*, Duan annotated that ‘*pan* 泮 /*phanh/ is borrowed for *po* 坡 /*phar/ based on alliteration.’⁴⁴¹ He suggested that ‘phonetic borrowing often occurs between homonyms, while it is not necessary for the two characters to have the same pronunciation to be in a phonetic borrowing relationship’ (*Jiajie duo quzhu tongyin, yiyoububi tongyin zhe* 假借多取諸同音，亦有不必同音者)。⁴⁴² Therefore, Duan was not consistent in his approach to the criteria of phonetic borrowing.

The phonetic relationship between two characters is a prerequisite for judging a phonetic borrowing relationship. The two characters should have the same or a similar pronunciation in Old Chinese. However, the phonetic relationship is not merely about alliterative or rhymed syllables. When considering similar pronunciation, if the two characters are alliterative, their rhymes should also be somewhat close. Similarly, if the two characters are rhymed, their

⁴³⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 842.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 568.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 689.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, p. 503.

initials should not be too far apart.⁴⁴³ The uncertainty surrounding Duan's principles of phonetic borrowing may stem from his inaccurate judgement of the phonetic relationship involved in phonetic borrowing.

3.6.5 Arbitrary Use of Words.

Duan's arbitrary use of words like 'all' and 'must' can be observed in sentences such as 'phonetic compounds that share a given phonetic element *all* share a given meaning' (*Fancong mousheng, jieyou mouyi* 凡从某聲，皆有某義); 'homonyms *must* have similar meanings' (*Tongsheng zhiyi bi xiangjin* 同聲之義必相近). Additionally, his direct revision of the *Shuowen*'s original texts reflects a sense of overconfidence. Duan might attempt to find stable rules and linguistic laws that are universally applicable, but he neglected the complexity of language, as exceptions exist under certain conditions. Wang Li remarks that some of Duan's judgments, such as 'additional statements by uncultured people' (*qianren suozen* 淺人所增) and 'cancellation by uncultured people' (*qianren suoshan* 淺人所刪), were Duan's own assumptions.⁴⁴⁴ Sometimes, Duan even directly altered words in the *Shuowen*, which is inappropriate because direct alteration of the original text is considered taboo for annotators.

For example:

Shuowen: 繼(繼), 續也。从糸 繼 (繼)。一曰反 繼 爲繼。

The character *ji* 繼(繼) means 'to continue'. It combines the intentions of *mi* 糸 (silk) and *jue* 繼 (in the original text of the *Shuowen*, it is *ji* 繼 which means 'to continue') . Another explanation is that 繼 is the opposite of *jue* 繼 (to break off, to discontinue).

Duanzhu: 各本篆文作繼，解作从糸繼，則不可通。今正。此會意字。从糸 繼 者，謂以糸聯其絕也。⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Chu Chia-ning, *Xunguxue zhilü*, p. 40.

⁴⁴⁴ Wang Li, *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi*, p. 119.

⁴⁴⁵ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 652.

In other versions, the seal script of 繼 is composed of 糸 and 繼, which is incorrect. Now I have corrected it. This is an associative compound and should be composed of 糸 and 繼, which means to continue the finish (*jue* 繼) with silk.

Note: Duan changed 繼 in the *Shuowen* into 繼, noting that it should be composed of 糸 and 繼. Wang Yun 王筠 criticised Duan, stating that ‘it is a big mistake that Duan changed 繼 into 繼. The ancient script of *jue* 絕 (to break off) is written as 繼. *Ji* 繼 (to continue) is the opposite of *jue* 繼 (to break off). Later, with the addition of the classifier 糸, the small seal script of *ji* 繼 (to continue) was created.’⁴⁴⁶

Although there were shortcomings in Duan’s work, they cannot overshadow his revolutionary achievements in historical phonology, lexicology, exegesis, etymology, and graphology. Wang Li notes in his *History of Chinese Linguistics* that Duan’s study of the *Shuowen* developed a school of his own and exerted great influence. He remained loyal to Xu Shen but also criticised Xu and surpassed Xu. Duan made many brilliant and pertinent statements in his annotations. While there were some shortcomings in his work, they did not diminish his overall contributions. Duan undoubtedly deserved the title of laureate in the *Shuowen* studies.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Wang Yun 王筠 (1784–1854), *Shuowen shili* 說文釋例 [Explanations with Examples of the *Shuowen*], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 216, p. 300.

⁴⁴⁷ Wang Li, *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi*, pp.116–121.

Chapter Four: The Elucidation of Duan Yucai's *Shengyi tongyuan* in the *Duanzhu*

This chapter constitutes an investigation into Duan's engagement with the *Shuowen*, aiming to discern Duan's approach to the *Shuowen* and extract the fundamental principles of *shengyi tongyuan* he proposed and followed in the *Duanzhu*. It also endeavours to offer a comprehensive explanation of Duan's principles through a critical analysis of the *Duanzhu*, drawing upon a broad range of linguistic materials gathered from various sources. In addition to the *Duanzhu*, references are made to the works of other Qing philologists as well as modern scholars, with further examples provided to elucidate Duan's work.

4.1 The Principle behind Sound-meaning Relations

Prior to the emergence of language and written words, simple sounds were utilised for communication, gradually evolving into complex languages. However, constrained by time and space, spoken language could neither be transmitted afar nor preserved for long. It is documented in *Xici* 繫辭, one of the appendices to the *Book of Changes*, that in the days of antiquity, Bao Xi 包犧 created the Eight Trigrams and used knotted cords to communicate and record information.⁴⁴⁸

Following a prolonged period of evolution, characters were created. Characters overcome the limitations of time and space, breaking the boundaries that speech could not. While language is used to convey ideas, written words serve the purpose of recording language. Consequently, the sound-meaning relations inherent in language predated the creation of characters. As articulated by Lin Yin: 'Language did not arbitrarily arise. Characters were created based on language. Thus, language came into being after sounds.'

⁴⁴⁸ *Zhouyi zhengyi*, pp. 350–351.

Characters were conceived after language'.⁴⁴⁹ Lin's words elucidate the principle underlying *shengyi tongyuan* in light of the nature of language. Chen Xinxiong further posited that 'language predates characters and is expressed through sound. Synonymous words were mostly articulated through the same sound prior to the advent of characters. This is the fundamental principle behind *shengyi tongyuan*'.⁴⁵⁰

In his annotations to the preface of the *Shuowen*, Duan proposed a sequence of characters creation: meaning, sound, and form; while advocating that the learning of characters should follow the order of form, sound, and meaning.⁴⁵¹ Chen Li also delineated the relationship between the form, sound, and meaning of Chinese characters at the inception of characters creation:

蓋天下事物之象，人目見之，則心有意；意欲達之，則口有聲。意者，象乎事物而構之者也；聲者，象乎意而宣之者也。聲不能傳於異地、留於異時，於是乎書之為文字。文字者，所以為意與聲之跡也。⁴⁵²

As to the phenomena in the world, it seems to be the case that people have a concept in their mind when they see them with their own eyes, and that they have a sound in their mouth if they wish to communicate this concept. Concepts are construed so as to resemble a concrete object. Sounds are made to conform to the concepts which they resemble. Since sounds cannot be transmitted afar or recorded for long, written words were created to record sounds. As a result, characters serve as the traces of sounds and meanings.

As one of Huang Kan's 黄侃 students, Lu Zongda 陸宗達 (1905–1988) argues that in the early stages of word emergence, sounds and meanings were randomly combined by customs. For many words in a language, the combinations of sounds and meanings are

⁴⁴⁹ Lin Yin 林尹, *Zhongguo shengyunxue tonglun* 中國聲韻學通論 [A General Theory of Chinese Phonology] (Taipei: Liming wenhua shiye gongsi, 2009), p. 1. The original Chinese text is: '語言不憑虛而起，文字附語言而作。故有聲音而後有語言，有語言而後有文字。'

⁴⁵⁰ Chen Xinxiong 陳新雄, *Xunguxue* 訓詁學 [Exegesis] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 2012), p. 260. The original Chinese text is: '未有文字之先，先有語言，語言由聲音而表達，故未有文字之前，同義之詞多以同音表達，此實為聲義同源之基本原理也。'

⁴⁵¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 772.

⁴⁵² Chen Li, *Dongshu dushu ji*, ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu, vol. 1160, p. 607. Translation quoted from: Wolfgang Behr, 'Some Ideas on the Origin of Language in Late Imperial China', p. 8.

arbitrary. With the enrichment of language, old words differentiated into new words, with meanings extending from the old words and sounds inheriting or slightly altering from the old words. Consequently, a historical relationship exists between source words and their derivatives, with cognate words sharing similar meanings and pronunciations.⁴⁵³ Modern scholar Chu Chia-ning 竺家寧 echoes similar sentiments, positing two stages regarding the combinations of sounds and meanings: In the origin of language, the combinations of sounds and meanings were arbitrary. This is the first stage. Since language was established, words began to multiply. As language continued to develop, one root word generated several new words that shared a similar sound and were semantically related. The newly derived words are referred to as cognate words. This is the second stage.⁴⁵⁴ Jiang Shaoyu also suggests that, generally speaking, there may not be a necessary connection between sound and meaning initially. People named objects arbitrarily, as Xunzi said, ‘Names have no intrinsic appropriateness. They are bound to something by agreement in order to name it. The agreement becomes fixed, the custom is established, and it is called appropriate’.⁴⁵⁵ However, during the process of deriving new words from original words, there is always a connection between sound and meaning.⁴⁵⁶

From the aforementioned statements, it is evident that the connections between sounds and meanings manifest primarily in two stages. Since the emergence of language, sounds have begun to be associated with meanings. Before the advent of characters, language (sounds) initially emerged to convey ideas (meanings). Though the combinations of sounds and meanings might be random with regard to the origin of language, we cannot entirely exclude

⁴⁵³ Lu Zongda and Wang Ning, *Xungu yu xunguxue*, p. 358.

⁴⁵⁴ Chu Chia-ning, *Xunguxue zhilü*, p. 30.

⁴⁵⁵ Xunzi, trans. John Knoblock, vol. II, p. 717. The original Chinese text: is ‘名無固宜，約之以命，約定俗成謂之宜。’

⁴⁵⁶ Jiang Shaoyu, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 7.

the possibility that certain sounds were used to depict certain meanings.⁴⁵⁷ It could be said that the sound symbolism mentioned in Chapter Two primarily represents phono-semantics during the early stages of language evolution. As language evolved, the combinations of sounds and meanings gradually became fixed and accepted through common practice. As communication became more complex, more linguistic symbols were needed. Consequently, words, as combinations of sounds and meanings, began to diversify from their root meanings. The derived words are cognate, resembling branches growing out of the same trunk or descendants originating from the same ancestor. Their common features embodied in sounds and meanings serve as the bond that connects them to each other. Essentially, Duan's *shengying tongyuan* mainly deals with the later stage of word differentiation.

The naming of an object may be derived from its characteristics. For instance, the word 'table' is called 'zhuo 桌' in Chinese, derived from the word *zhuo* 卓 meaning high or outstanding, reflecting the fact that a table is taller than a chair or a stool. In English, the word 'table' derives from the Latin word 'tabula' denoting 'wood', as tables are primarily made of wood. In German, the equivalent word is 'der Tisch', deriving from the Greek word 'discos' meaning round plate, as a table resembles a round plate used for serving food.⁴⁵⁸ Depending on the properties of a given object, such as shape, texture, colour, and usage, it can be named in various ways in different languages. Modern scholar Jane Geaney notes that 'names do nothing more than mirror the senses' discriminations by articulating those norms in sound as they pick things in the world.'⁴⁵⁹ The word used for naming an object and the word used to

⁴⁵⁷ For instance, laryngeal tends to convey the notion of big, such as *hong* 宏 /*gwrəŋ/ (grand); dental sound tends to indicate small, such as *jian* 尖 /*dzjamx/ (tip); nasal consonant is related to blur, such as *miao* 渺 /*mjiagwx/ (vague).

⁴⁵⁸ Zhang Zhiyi 張志毅, 'Cide liju 詞的理據' [The Agency of Words], *Yuyan jiaoxue yanjiu 語言教學與研究* 3 (1900): 123.

⁴⁵⁹ Jane Geaney, *Language as Bodily Practice in Early China: A Chinese Grammatology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), p. 175.

denote a certain characteristic of that object may be etymologically linked. This linkage reflects how words differentiated during the later stage of language development.

With reference to Chinese, etymological features can be identified in elements such as sound glosses and phonetic compounds. For instance, the phonetic compounds derived from *lun* 倫 (order) are homonyms and often relate to the concept of ‘order’. *Lun* 倫, with the ‘human’ (*ren* 人) classifier, means ‘the order in human relations’. *Lun* 論, with the ‘speech’ (*yan* 言) classifier, denotes ‘the order of speech’. *Lun* 淪, with the ‘water’ (*shui* 水) classifier, denotes the ‘order of ripples’. The phonetic element *lun* 倫 (order) serves as the common root of these phonetic compounds. Duan’s theories essentially explain the sound-meaning relations at this later stage of language development.

Form, sound, and meaning are three fundamental elements of Chinese characters, inseparable and interconnected. The Chinese script is ideographic; thus, a character’s meaning is related to its graphical form. As a character’s meaning is also linked to its sound, homonyms or near homonyms often bear similar meanings. However, people unfamiliar with Chinese characters often misperceive them as mainly pictographs, leading to the mistaken belief that the Chinese writing system is still underdeveloped. In reality, pictographs constitute a tiny proportion (less than one percent), while phonetic compounds comprise the principal part of the Chinese writing system. Among the 9,353 characters collected in the *Shuowen*, 7,697 characters are phonetic compounds, accounting for 82.29% of the total.⁴⁶⁰ The semantic-phonetic method is the primary means of deriving and proliferating Chinese characters, rendering them not only associated with but also distinctive from each other. Duan’s principles of sound-meaning relations of Chinese characters are proposed mainly through his analysis of the phonetic compounds in the *Shuowen*.

⁴⁶⁰ Lin Yin, *Wenzixue gaishuo*, p. 143.

4.2 The Proposal of *Shengyi tongyuan* Theory

Duan proposed *shengyi tongyuan* in his annotation for the phonetic compound ‘*zhen* 禛’ in the *Shuowen*. He improved upon the *youwen* theory and the *zimu* theory, elaborating on the sound-meaning relations between the phonetic element and the phonetic compound. Moreover, he demonstrated the etymon of the character contained in the phonetic elements, which inspired modern scholars to research cognate words in Chinese.

The first time Duan proposed his theory of *shengyi tongyuan* is in his annotation for the character *zhen* 禛 in the *Duanzhu*:

Shuowen: 禛，以真受福也。从示，真聲。

Zhen 禛 means ‘to obtain blessing by sincerity’. The character is comprised of *shi* 示 (issuing signs) with *zhen* 真 (sincerity) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 聲與義同源，故諧聲之偏旁多與字義相近，此會意形聲兩兼之字致多也。《說文》或稱其會意，略其形聲；或稱其形聲，略其會意。雖則省文，實欲互見。不知此，則聲與義隔。⁴⁶¹

Sound and meaning spring from the same source. Therefore, the phonetic element is often closely linked to the meaning of the entire character. This is why many characters span both *huiyi* and *xingsheng*. The *Shuowen* either acknowledges *huiyi* and omits *xingsheng* or acknowledges *xingsheng* and omits *huiyi*. Even if [Xu Shen] omitted text in this way, he wanted both to be recognised. Failure to realise this results in the separation of sound and meaning.

The Qing scholar Xu Hao 徐灝 (1810–1879) commented under Duan’s annotation for 禛 that the words ‘to obtain blessing by sincerity’ indicate that the utmost sincerity can invoke blessings from heaven. The meaning of 禛 is indicated in its phonetic element 真 (sincerity).⁴⁶² 禛 and 真 have the same sound and are semantically related.⁴⁶³ This corresponds to Duan’s assertion that the phonetic element is often closely related to the meaning of the entire character.

⁴⁶¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 2.

⁴⁶² Xu Hao 徐灝, *Shuowen jiezi zhujian* 說文解字注箋 [Sub-commentary on the *Duanzhu*], ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu, vol. 225, p. 132.

⁴⁶³ Yin Jiming 殷寄明, *Hanyu tongyuanqi dadian* 漢語同源詞大典 [Dictionary of Chinese Cognate Words], vol. 2 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2018), p. 1169.

Duan's proposal of *shengyi tongyuan* is attributed to his insights into the link between the form, sound, and meaning of Chinese characters. The principle of *shengyi tongyuan* can be, to some extent, ascribed to the sequence of character creation. This is illustrated in Duan's annotation for the character *ci* 詞.

Shuowen: 詞，意內而言外也。从司言。

Ci 詞 (words) appears as speech outwardly, while expressing thoughts inwardly. The character is comprised of *si* 司 (to supervise) and *yan* 言 (words, speech).

Duanzhu: 意者，文字之義也；言者，文字之聲也。詞者，文字形、聲之合也。凡許之說形、說聲，皆言外也。有義而後有聲，有聲而後有形，造字之本也。形在而聲在焉，形聲在而義在焉，六藝之學也。⁴⁶⁴

Yi 意 (thought) implies the meaning of a character, while *yan* 言 (speech) indicates the sound of a character. *Ci* 詞 (word) represents the combination of a character's form and sound. The form and sound mentioned by Xu Shen pertain to the outward signs. According to the theory, sound came after meaning, and form came after sound, marking the origin of character creation. Once a form is established, sound follows. Once form and sound are in place, meaning naturally emerges. This outlines the process of learning the Six Arts.⁴⁶⁵

Duan's words echo the statements in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Heart and the Carving of Dragons) that 'the heart, indeed, sends out sounds by means of spoken words. Spoken words, for their part, reside in concrete form in written graphs' (*Xin ji tuosheng yuyan, yan yi jixing yuzi* 心既託聲於言，言亦寄形於字).⁴⁶⁶ Regarding the origin of language, the question of which came earlier, sound or meaning, is still debatable. Nevertheless, Duan's annotation illustrates that language serves as the medium to convey ideas. Characters were later created to record language. Thereby, sound precedes form and carries meaning. With regard to a character's graphic form, it conveys meaning through its form and constructure, as Chinese characters are ideographic scripts. Moreover, the forms of

⁴⁶⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 434.

⁴⁶⁵ The Six Arts include propriety (*li* 禮), music (*yue* 樂), archery (*she* 射), charioteering (*yu* 馭), writing (*shu* 書), and mathematics (*shu* 數). Here Duan specifically referred to writing.

⁴⁶⁶ Liu Xie 劉勰 (465–520), *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 [The Literary Heart and the Carving of Dragons], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 1478, p. 54. Translation quoted from Timothy Michael O'Neill's *Ideography and Chinese Language Theory*, p. 150.

Chinese characters are mostly related to their sounds because a large proportion of Chinese characters are phonetic compounds whose sounds are indicated by their phonetic elements. Phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element are homonyms in Old Chinese and often semantically related. Therefore, the outer signs (form and sound) and inner meaning are correlated to each other. The sequence of learning the character is from outside to inside, that is, perceiving meaning through both form and sound.

After Duan, Huang Chengji set forth that ‘sound stems from meaning, and the source of meaning can be traced through sound. All the diversified phenomena arise from one simplicity: heaven and earth. All of the complicated sounds arise from one source: mouth and tongue. In summary, sound is indispensable for explanatory glosses.’⁴⁶⁷ Similar statements can be found in the preface to *Shuowen shengbiao* 說文聲表序 (Preface to the Sounds in the *Shuowen*) written by Chen Li, wherein it is expressed that in ancient times, before characters appeared, people communicated through language. Language was the medium through which ideas were conveyed via sounds. Thus, sounds originated from meanings. With the creation of characters, meanings and sounds became associated with them.⁴⁶⁸ Liu Shiwei also stated in ‘*Wuming suyuan* 物名溯源’ (Trace the Source of Naming) from his *Zuo’an waiji* 左奩外集 (Collected Works of Zuo’an) that names originate from spoken words. Thus, when an entity exists, it is given a specific name; when a particular meaning exists, it is associated with a particular sound. Without an entity, there is no name to define. Therefore, to examine the origin of an entity’s name, its sound should be consulted first. Entities with names

⁴⁶⁷ Huang Sheng and Huang Chengji, *Zigu yifu he’an*, p. 267. The original Chinese text is: ‘蓋聲起於義，義根於聲，其源出於天地之至簡極紛，其究發為口舌之萬殊一本，要之，非聲音不足以為訓詁。’

⁴⁶⁸ Huang Guosheng 黃國聲, *Chenlijì* 陳澧集 [Anthology of Chen Li], vol. 1 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2007), p. 124. The original Chinese text is: ‘上古之世，未有文字，人之言語，以聲達意。聲者，肖乎意而出者也。文字既作，意與聲皆附麗焉。’

pronounced similarly may share characteristics, regardless of different categories.⁴⁶⁹

The statements above clarify the sound-meaning relationships before the creation of characters and shed light on the rationale behind seeking semantics from phonetics. Each of them can serve as a footnote for Duan's *shengyi tongyuan*. Duan's theory aligns with the nature of language. Before the advent of characters, similar sounds conveyed similar concepts, which may underpin Duan's theory. Moreover, beyond *shengyi tongyuan*, Duan delved deeper into the role of sound in meaning and extrapolated the implications of *shengyi tongyuan*. These implications are evident in his annotations to the *Shuowen*. The subsequent sections systematically analyse the *Duanzhu*, emphasising his principles of sound-meaning relations and illustrating how he presented them in the *Duanzhu*.

4.3 A Character's Meaning is Invariably Contained in its Sound

As sound and meaning spring from the same source, the meaning of a character can be sought through its sound. This principle is presented in Duan's annotation for the character *cong* 聰.

Shuowen: 聰，鎗聰也。从金，悤聲。

Cong 聰 is the word for 'the sound of a bell ring'. It is comprised of *jin* 金 (metal) with *cong* 悤 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 囱者多孔，蔥者空中，聰者耳順，義皆相類。凡字之義必得諸字之聲者如此。⁴⁷⁰

Cong 囱 (window in ancient times) is characterised by its multiple holes. *Cong* 蔥 (scallion) suggests hollowness (deriving its name from the tubular shape of its leaves). Meanwhile, *cong* 聰 conveys the concept of 'acute hearing' (reflecting the ability of individuals to gather information through auditory senses). The meanings of these homonyms are similar to each other (related to the notion of 'hollowness'). Thus, it can be inferred that the meaning of a character is invariably contained in its sound.

The pronunciations of 蔥, 聰, and 聰 are denoted by their shared phonetic element 悤.

⁴⁶⁹ Liu Shippei *quanji*, vol. 3, p. 247. The original Chinese text is: '夫名起於言，惟有此物乃有此稱。惟有此義，乃有此音。蓋舍實則無以為名也。故欲考物名之起源，當先審其音。蓋字音既同，則物類雖殊，而狀態形質，大抵不遠。'

⁴⁷⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 717.

The meanings of these characters are attributed to 囟 and are related to the concept of ‘a hollow in the middle’.⁴⁷¹ Duan further noted that *zhongzhi* 種植 (to plant) and *chongchu* 舂杵 (pestle) also have similar sounds and meanings.⁴⁷² The characters *zhong* 種 /*tjungh/, *chong* 舂 /*sthjung/, and *cong* 囟 /*tshrung/ not only have similar initial consonants, which are dental sounds, but also belong to the same rhyme group of *dong* 東 /*-ung/. Although the graphic forms of these characters differ, their meanings are all related to the notion of ‘having a hole in the centre’. The *Duanzhu* demonstrates that the meaning of a character can be discerned through its sound, regardless of its form.

In addition, Duan’s annotation for the character *le* 隄 also provides the evidence for this principle.

Shuowen: 隄，地理也。从阜，力聲。

Le 隄 denotes ‘the veins in the earth’. It is comprised of *fu* 阜 (mound) with *li* 力 (tendon) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 力者，筋也。筋有脈絡可尋，故凡有理之字皆从力。隄者，地理也。枋者，木理也。泐者，水理也。⁴⁷³

Li 力 means ‘tendon’. Tendons can be traced by their channels and the network vessels. Thus, all the characters designating things with veins have a component *li* 力 (tendon). Likewise, *le* 隄 designates the topology of the land; *li* 枋 designates the texture of wood; and *le* 泐 designates the structure of a river.⁴⁷⁴

The characters *le* 隄, *li* 枋, and *le* 泐 all relate to ‘vein’ (*li* 理) and are pronounced as *li* 力 /*ljæk/ (tendon) in Old Chinese.⁴⁷⁵ This association arises from the fact that *li* 力 /*ljæk/ and *li* 理 /*ljægx/ share the same initial consonant /*l-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of *zhi* 之 /*-ək/, /*-əg/. 力 and 理 are near homonyms in Old Chinese and semantically related to each other. Consequently, the sounds and meanings of 隄, 枋, and 泐 are derived

⁴⁷¹ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 3, p. 1393.

⁴⁷² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 717.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 738.

⁴⁷⁴ Translation quoted from: He Mingyong and Jing Peng, *Chinese Lexicology*, p. 133.

⁴⁷⁵ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 27.

from 力 (tendon), which is phonetically and semantically connected to 理 (vein). Thus, Duan proposed that ‘the meaning of a character could be approached through its sound’.

Similar statements can be found in Duan’s annotation for the character *che* 屮:

Shuowen: 屮，艸木初生也。象丨出形有枝莖也。古文或以爲艸字。讀若徹。

Che 屮 refers to the initial sprouting of grass and trees. The character depicts 丨 emerging with branches and stems. 屮 is also used for *cao* 艸 (grass) in ancient scripts. 屮 reads like *che* 徹.⁴⁷⁶

Duanzhu: 徹，通也，義存乎音。⁴⁷⁷

徹 means ‘unobstructed’ (e.g. emerging out of the earth). The meaning lies in the sound.

屮 /*thrjat/ and 徹 /*thrjat/ are homonyms in Old Chinese. Duan noted the semantic relationship between 屮 and 徹, which illustrates that ‘meaning is contained in sound’. Though 屮 and 徹 have different graphic forms, they are semantically related due to the sound identification.

Chen Li clarified the reason behind the principle ‘a character’s meaning is contained in its sound’ from the aspect of the derivation of phonetic compounds. It is said in his preface to *Shuowen shengbiao* that:

形聲之字，由聲而作者也，聲肖乎意，故形聲之字，其意即在所諧之聲。數字同諧一聲，則數字同出一意。孳乳而生，至再至三，而不離其宗焉。⁴⁷⁸

The phonetic compound is formed based on its phonetic element, which depicts the character’s meaning. Thus, the meaning of a phonetic compound lies in its phonetic element. Phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element often originate from the same meaning. The phonetic element gives rise to phonetic compounds, from one to two, three, [or more characters], while adhering to the fundamental principle of character derivation.

Many phonetic compounds are derived from their phonetic elements. In this case, it can be inferred that the phonetic element often indicates the source of the character’s meaning.

⁴⁷⁶ ‘The ancient script’ in the *Shuowen* generally refers to the scripts of the Six States (403–ca.221 BCE), the scripts used before the small seal script (221 BCE–8CE). See Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林 [Collected Works of Guantang] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2014), p. 167.

⁴⁷⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 22.

⁴⁷⁸ Huang Guosheng, *Chenliji*, vol. 1, p. 125.

Huang Chengji elaborated on the concept that phonetic compounds constitute a significant proportion of the Six Principles of Character Formation. He suggested that meaning primarily resides in sound, and the phonetic element simultaneously carries a semantic function. The sound and meaning embedded in the phonetic element serve as the origin from which phonetic compounds are derived.⁴⁷⁹ According to Huang's perspective, the phonetic element, whether positioned on the right, left, or upper part of a character, indicates the root of derived phonetic compounds. When the object belongs to the category of water, the water classifier (*shui* 水) is appended. Likewise, if the object pertains to wood, earth, fire, or metal, classifiers such as wood (*mu* 木), earth (*tu* 土), fire (*huo* 火), or metal (*jin* 金) are respectively added. Whether denoting celestial phenomena, human activities, trees, grass, insects, or fish, the corresponding classifier is affixed to the phonetic element. Thus, the classifier serves as a category, while the phonetic element acts as the root, akin to a mother giving birth to children with various classifiers. Huang suggests that the original meanings of characters stem from their roots.⁴⁸⁰

Huang's statements echo Duan's principle that 'a character's meaning is invariably contained in its sound' and further elucidate the evolution from a phonetic element to the derived phonetic compounds. It can be inferred that when language first emerged, simple sounds were utilised for communication, conveying basic concepts. However, as society progressed and human thought became more nuanced, there arose a need for diverse representations of fundamental ideas. Words differentiation and characters derivation were carried out simultaneously. Consequently, classifiers infused a range of meanings into the original phonetic elements. This process gave rise to a series of phonetic compounds,

⁴⁷⁹ Huang Sheng and Huang Chengji, *Zigu yifu he'an*, p. 75.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

reflecting the expanding complexity of human communication and cognition.

4.3.1 The Relationship between the Phonetic Element and Phonetic Compound

As society developed, more and more words were conceived to convey ideas. During the process of word differentiation, many characters were derived by adding classifiers to the phonetic element. Chen Sipeng 陳斯鵬 explains that during the historical development of the Chinese writing system, one character was originally used to record different words. Later, new characters with certain changes in graphic form were created to take on the semantic functions previously carried by the old characters.⁴⁸¹ In other words, when a phonetic element alone might lead to ambiguity, it could be supplemented by adding a semantic element to the graph.⁴⁸² The classifiers (semantic elements) were attached to the source characters to convey ideas in a specific way. This is an effective way to create new characters. Therefore, Duan noted in his ‘*Liushu yinyunbiao*’ that ‘the formation of phonetic compounds, as one of the principles in *liushu*, contributes to the derivation of characters’ (*Liushu zhiyou xiesheng, wenzi zhi suoyi rizi ye* 六書之有諧聲，文字之所以日滋也).⁴⁸³ The later derived phonetic compounds with classifiers appended assumed the meanings previously represented by their phonetic elements. Therefore, phonetic elements, many of which are proto-forms, contain the sources of the meanings of phonetic compounds.

For example, in the *Shuowen*, *qi* 启 is explained as ‘to open’.⁴⁸⁴ Later, *qi* 啟 with *pu* 支 (to tap, to beat) added is also used to denote ‘to open’. The oracle bone inscription of 启 (啟)

⁴⁸¹ Chen Sipeng 陳斯鵬, *Chuxi jianbo zhong zixing yu yinyi guanxi yanjiu* 楚系簡帛中字形與音義關係研究 [Study on the Relationship between Forms, Sounds, and Meanings in Chu Bamboo and Silk Scripts] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011), p. 163.

⁴⁸² William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 64.

⁴⁸³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 827.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 58.

is written as 𠄎,⁴⁸⁵ depicting opening a window or a door with a hand. It is the original script for ‘opening’. Another oracle bone inscription 𠄎 with *kou* 口 (mouth) added means ‘to instruct or to open’.⁴⁸⁶ In the *Shuowen*, *qi* 啟 is explained as ‘to instruct’. It is comprised of 支 (to tap, to beat) with 启 (to open) as the phonetic.⁴⁸⁷ 啟 is also linked to the sense of ‘opening’ as it means ‘to enlighten the ignorant and open up their minds’. Another character *qi* 啓, written as 𠄎 in oracle bone inscription,⁴⁸⁸ is defined as ‘rain ceasing’ in the *Shuowen*. It is comprised of *ri* 日 (sun) with abbreviated 啟 as the phonetic.⁴⁸⁹ When the rain ceases, the clouds disappear as if the sky is unveiled and let the sunshine in. Therefore, the characters 启, 啟, and 啓 are cognate words associated with the sense of ‘opening’.

Two further examples:

Example 1: The original meaning of the character *zhi* 止 is ‘toe or footprint’. Its oracle bone inscription is written as 止, depicting the sketch of the toe.⁴⁹⁰ For instance, in the sentence ‘*lǚjiao miezhi* 履校滅止’ (His feet are in shackles and his toes are covered) from the *Book of Changes*,⁴⁹¹ 止 refers to the original meaning ‘toes’. Duan offered the following annotation under 止, noting that ‘there is no character *zhi* 趾 (toes) in the *Shuowen*, 止 is equivalent to 趾.’⁴⁹² Li Xueqin 李學勤 also states in *Ziyuan* 字源 (The Origin of Chinese Characters) that 止 is the original form of 趾, meaning toes. Moreover, 止 is the etymological root of the series of phonetic compounds with 止 as the phonetic element. As the toes are at the bottom part of the human body, 止 was later extended to denote ‘foundations’ and written as *zhi* 址 or *zhi* 址. Since people can go anywhere by foot, 止 is extended to denote ‘arriving’.

⁴⁸⁵ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 3, p. 2077.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 123.

⁴⁸⁸ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 3, p. 2077.

⁴⁸⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 307.

⁴⁹⁰ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 1, p. 758.

⁴⁹¹ *Zhouyi zhengyi*, p. 120.

⁴⁹² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 68.

Accordingly, 止 is further extended into the notion of ‘stopping’, ‘resting’, and ‘dwelling place’ (zhi 址).⁴⁹³ In the *Shuowen*, 阡 is explained as ‘foundation’. It is comprised of fu 阜 (mound) with 止 as the phonetic. Alternatively, the classifier of 阡 (i.e., 阜) can also be written as tu 土 (earth). Duan offered the following annotation under the character 阡, noting that ‘止 is defined as “base”, sharing the same sound and meaning as 阡. Zhi 止 refers to “the base of a plant”, while zhi 阡 refers to “the foundations of a city”.’⁴⁹⁴ It can be noted that 阡, 阡, and 址 are cognate words derived from 止 and are all linked to the sense of ‘foundation or base’. Wang Li points out in his *Tongyuan zidian* that 止, 阡, 阡, and 址 are actually the same word.⁴⁹⁵ In Yin Jiming’s *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, 阡, 阡, and 址 are also considered cognate words that have the common meaning of ‘foundation’.⁴⁹⁶


Example 2:

Shuowen: 共，同也。从廿升。

Gong 共 denotes ‘together or all’. It is comprised of nian 廿 (twenty) and gong 升 (to join the hands).

Duanzhu: 《周禮》、《尚書》「供給」「供奉」字皆借「共」字爲之。⁴⁹⁷

In the *Zhou Rites* and the *Book of Documents*, the words for ‘supplying or providing’ (*gongji* 供給) and ‘offering sacrifice to’ (*gongfeng* 供奉) are both written as 共.

The oracle bone inscription of 共 is written as , which is supposed to indicate ‘providing for or offering in worship’ (*gong* 供).⁴⁹⁸ Duan offered the following annotation under the character 拱, noting that ‘共 was used for 拱 in ancient Chinese. The annotations for the *Book of Rites*, “Drinking Ceremonies at Country Feasts” states that “共 means *gongshou* 拱手 (with one’s hands joined across one’s chest)”.’⁴⁹⁹ *Notes on the Duanzhu* states

⁴⁹³ Li Xueqin 李學勤, *Ziyuan* 字源 [The Origin of Chinese Characters] (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2013), p. 106.

⁴⁹⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 741. In the *Shuowen*, 止 is defined as ‘the base of a plant’.

⁴⁹⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 90.

⁴⁹⁶ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 155.

⁴⁹⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 105.

⁴⁹⁸ Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen zidian*, p. 236.

⁴⁹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 601.

that ‘共 and 拱 are ancient and modern graphs.’⁵⁰⁰ Therefore, *gong* 供 (to provide for, to offer in worship) and *gong* 拱 (to fold hands on chest) are later characters derived from 共. In other words, the phonetic element 共 contains the etymon of 供 and 拱. In Schuessler’s *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, 共, 拱, and 供 are classified as cognate words.⁵⁰¹ Yin Jiming also classifies 共, 拱, and 供 as cognate words that carry the meaning of ‘respect’.⁵⁰² This testifies Duan’s principle that ‘the meaning of a character is contained in its sound’.⁵⁰³

In addition, Sampson remarks that simple graphs were used not just for the word for which they had been invented, but also for homonyms or near homonyms having unrelated meanings. The resulting high degree of ambiguity was in due course alleviated, in many but not all cases, by adding semantic determiners to distinguish (near) homonyms written with the same basic graph. Thus, we find e.g. (now *mei* 眉) used for ‘eyebrow’; with the addition of 氵 ‘water’, *mei* 湄 represented a homonym ‘brink of a stream’; with the addition of 女 ‘woman’, *mei* 媚 represented ‘attractive or seductive’; and so on.⁵⁰⁴ In this case, characters with 眉 as the phonetic element, such as 湄 (coast, brink of a stream) and *mei* 楣 (lintel of door or window), are related to the sense of ‘edge’.⁵⁰⁵ The classifiers *shui* 氵 (water) and *mu* 木 (wood) specifically denote the type of edge.

⁵⁰⁰ Xu Hao, *Shuowen jiezi zhujian*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 225, p. 328.

⁵⁰¹ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 257.

⁵⁰² Yin Jiming 殷寄明, *Hanyu tongyuan zici congkao* 漢語同源字詞叢考 [A Study of Chinese Cognate Words] (Shanghai: Dongfang chubanshe, 2007), p. 157.

⁵⁰³ In Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction system, the /*N-/ prefix typically derived stative intransitive verbs, often out of transitive verbs. *Gong* 共 /*k(r)ɔŋʔ/ meaning ‘to join the hands’ is a transitive verb. A stative verb *gong* 共 /*N-k(r)ɔŋʔ-s/ meaning ‘altogether’ was derived through prefixation of /*N-/. Moreover, the departing tone of *gong* 共 in Middle Chinese derived from the suffix /*-s/. See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart’s *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 54.

⁵⁰⁴ Geoffrey Sampson and Chen Zhiqun, ‘The Reality of Compound Ideographs’, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* vol. 41. 2 (2013): 259.

⁵⁰⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 451. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 377.

With different classifiers added, phonetic compounds were formed to explicitly record meanings. This process reflects the adaptation of characters to language. In his *Shuowen shili*, Wang Yun stated that ‘sound is the source of character creation. Later on, different classifiers were attached to a phonetic element. Then related phonetic compounds were generated’.⁵⁰⁶ This statement clarifies the relationship between the phonetic element and phonetic compound. The phonetic element often contains the source of meaning, while the classifier denotes the category. Jiang Shaoyu refers to the original phonetic elements as *benyuan zi* 本原字 (source characters), while the later derived phonetic compounds as *qubie zi* 區別字 (differentiated characters), which are created to differentiate different meanings contained in the original phonetic element.⁵⁰⁷ Zhang Lianrong 張聯榮 uses the same terms and observes that differentiated characters commonly emerge through the addition of semantic elements to the source character, which contains the etymon. The majority of differentiated characters exhibit an etymological link with the source character.⁵⁰⁸ Zhao Keqin 趙克勤 refers to the source characters as *guzi* 古字 (ancient characters), while the derived characters as *jinzi* 今字 (modern characters).⁵⁰⁹ Whatever they are called, they represent the process of derivation from a phonetic element to the related phonetic compounds.

However, not all the phonetic compounds in the history of Chinese writing were created through the process of adding the semantic classifier. It soon became common to create new phonetic compounds without initially going through a stage of phonetic borrowing. Handel suggests that the one-step process of character creation was achieved by analogy with the many phonetic compounds already present in the writing system. For example, there is no

⁵⁰⁶ Wang Yun, *Shuowen shili*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 215, p. 569. The original Chinese text is: ‘聲者，造字之本也。及其後也，有是聲，即以聲配形而為字，形聲一門之所以廣也。’

⁵⁰⁷ Jiang Shaoyu, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 207.

⁵⁰⁸ Zhang Lianrong 張聯榮, *Guhanyu ciyi lun* 古漢語詞義論 [Lexical Semantics of Old Chinese] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 127.

⁵⁰⁹ Zhao Keqin, *Gudai hanyu cihuixue*, p. 266.

evidence that the simple graph *fang* 方 (square) was ever used to write the morpheme *fang* 芳 ‘fragrant’. It, therefore, seems likely that the compound character *fang* 芳 was created in one step, and was the first and only graph used to write *fang* ‘fragrant’. Whether or not this example is historically correct, it is certainly true that by the Han dynasty the ‘one-step’ creation of compounds to represent new morphemes was the norm and remains so today.⁵¹⁰

4.3.2 Further Examples of the Phonetic Compounds Which are Derived from their Phonetic Elements

Liu Shippei once declared:

造字之次，獨體先而合體後，即《說文序》所謂「其後形聲相益也」。古人觀察事物，以義象區，不以質體別。複援義象制名，故數物義象相同，命名亦同。及本語言制文字，即以名物之音為字音。故義象即同，所從之聲亦同。所從之聲既同，在偏旁未益以前，僅為一字，即假所從得聲之字以為用。⁵¹¹

With regard to the sequence of character creation, simple graphs were formed before compound characters. Just as it is said in the preface to the *Shuowen* that ‘afterwards, forms and sounds (*xingsheng*) mutually augmented each other (e.g., two or more than two simple graphs were combined), compound characters were formed.’ The ancients observed things according to their general images without distinguishing their specific characteristics. Thus, objects were generally named after their images. The objects having similar images were generally given the same name.⁵¹² As characters were created based on language, a character’s pronunciation was based on the object’s name. Hence the characters representing the objects of similar images were pronounced the same. Namely, the objects of similar images were represented by the same phonetic element before the classifiers were added.

Liu’s statements imply that compound characters appeared after simple graphs. Phonetic compounds emerged after phonetic elements. That is to say, many phonetic compounds are derived from their phonetic elements. Therefore, the etymological source of a phonetic compound is contained in its phonetic element. It can be evidenced by the fact that phonetic

⁵¹⁰ Zev Handel, *Sinography: The Borrowing and Adaption of the Chinese Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 45.

⁵¹¹ Liu Mengxi 劉夢溪, *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu jingdian* 中國現代學術經典 [Modern Chinese Academic Classics] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), p. 652.

⁵¹² For example, many big things are pronounced as *hong*, such as *hong* 閤 /*gwrəŋ/ (big gate), *hong* 宏 /*gwrəŋ/ (big house), and *hong* 弘 /*gwəŋ/ (big bow).

compounds are often written as their phonetic element in ancient scripts. As Chen Sipeng notes, the development of the writing system is slower than that of language. This can be illustrated by the phenomenon that the newly derived cognate words are represented by the same character that was used to represent the root word.⁵¹³

For example, in oracle bone inscriptions, *xiang* 饗 (banquet) is written as *xiang* 鄉 (village).⁵¹⁴ *Lin* 廩 (granary) is written as *lin* 囷 (stockpile),⁵¹⁵ *bi* 鄙 (vulgar) as *bi* 畝 (hoard).⁵¹⁶ As for the bronze inscriptions, *zu* 祖 (ancestor) is inscribed as *qie* 且 (memorial tablet used for the sacrificial ceremony).⁵¹⁷ *Wei* 衛 (to guard) is inscribed as *wei* 韋 (to surround),⁵¹⁸ *zuo* 作 (to compose) as *zha* 乍 (for the first time).⁵¹⁹ Similar examples can be found in the *Shuowen* where many small seal scripts are written as the ancient scripts with the added classifiers.⁵²⁰ For instance, *chou* 𠂔 is the ancient script of *chou* 疇 (ploughed field).⁵²¹ 肱 is the ancient script of *gong* 肱 (upper arm),⁵²² *xian* 𠂔 of *xian* 顯 (obvious),⁵²³ and so forth.

In the examples provided above, it is evident that in the process of character derivation, many classifiers, functioning as distinguishing marks for classification, were subsequently added to the phonetic element. The phonetic element serves as the proto-form for the later derived phonetic compound. Consequently, many phonetic compounds exhibit semantic relationships with their phonetic elements. Duan exemplified the derivational linkage between the phonetic element and phonetic compound in his annotations to the *Shuowen*. Below are

⁵¹³ Chen Sipeng, *Chuxi jianbo zhong zixing yu yinyi guanxi yanjiu*, p. 66.

⁵¹⁴ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 1, p. 373.

⁵¹⁵ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 3, p. 1965.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1967.

⁵¹⁷ Zhou Fagao, *Jinwen gulin*, vol. 1, p. 103.

⁵¹⁸ Zhou Fagao, *Jinwen gulin*, vol. 2, p. 1081.

⁵¹⁹ Zhou Fagao, *Jinwen gulin*, vol. 8, p. 5020.

⁵²⁰ ‘The ancient script’ in the *Shuowen* generally refers to the scripts used in the Six States (403–ca.221 BCE), the scripts used before the small seal script (221 BCE–8CE). See Wang Guowei, *Guantang jilin*, p. 167.

⁵²¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 702.

⁵²² *Ibid*, p. 116.

⁵²³ *Ibid*, p. 310.

additional examples demonstrating phonetic compounds derived from their phonetic elements.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 它, 虫也。从虫而長, 象冤曲垂尾形。上古艸疋患它, 故相問無它乎。

The character *ta* 它 denotes ‘serpent’. It depicts a snake, which is long, mimicking the coiled shape and a tail hanging down. In archaic times, when people lived among grasslands, they harboured a fear of serpents. Consequently, they often inquired of one another: ‘It (the serpent) is not there, is it?’

Duanzhu: 乃又加虫左旁, 是俗字也。⁵²⁴

It was later attached with *hui* 虫 (snake) on the left side and became the popular form (which is *she* 蛇).⁵²⁵

Note: Since 它 was borrowed to signify the third person pronoun, the phonetic compound 蛇 was created to convey the sense of ‘snake’. In the Chu scripts, 它 is still used to denote its original meaning of ‘snake’ (蛇).⁵²⁶

Example 2: *Zhou* 州 originally served as the proto-form of *zhou* 洲, denoting ‘a land surrounded by water’. The *Shuowen* quotes ‘*zaihe zhizhou* 在河之州’ (upon an islet in the brook) from the *Book of Poetry*, ‘Songs Collected South of the Capital, Cooing and Wooing’ to exemplify the meaning of *zhou* 州.⁵²⁷ Duan annotated that ‘since 州 was later extended to signify “*jiuzhou* 九州” (the Nine Provinces of China), the popular form 洲 was then created.’⁵²⁸ Namely, the classifier ‘*shui* 水’ (water) was added to 州 to specifically denote ‘islet’. Li Xueqin’s *Ziyuan* also shows that the original meaning of 州 is ‘a place which is habitable in the midst of water’. 洲 was subsequently derived from 州 to exclusively convey this meaning.⁵²⁹

Example 3:

Shuowen: 然, 燒也。从火, 朕聲。

⁵²⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 684.

⁵²⁵ Popular form is used daily for simplicity and convenience.

⁵²⁶ Chen Sipeng, *Chuxi jianbo zhong zixing yu yinyi guanxi yanjiu*, p. 42.

⁵²⁷ *Shi jing* 詩經 [The Book of Poetry], trans. Wang Rongpei 汪榕培 (Changsha: Hunan People’s Publishing House, 2008), p. 3.

⁵²⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 574.

⁵²⁹ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 1017.

Ran 然 denotes ‘to light a fire’. It is comprised of *huo* 火 (fire) with *ran* 然 (dog meat, burn) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 通段為語詞，訓為如此。俗作燃。⁵³⁰

Ran 然 is often borrowed for the function word ‘to be like this’. Thus, its popular form is then written as *ran* 燃.

Note: The character *ran* 然 originally denoted ‘to burn’ as defined in the *Shuowen*. This meaning can be exemplified by the sentence ‘*ruo huozhi shiran, quanzhi shida* 若火之始然，泉之始達’ (It may be compared to the burning start of a fire or the gushing out of a spring) from *Mencius*.⁵³¹ 然 was later borrowed for function words, including demonstrative pronoun, exclamation, adverb, and conjunction. As a result, the phonetic compound 燃 was created as a later form, adding the classifier *huo* 火 (fire) to denote the original meaning of ‘burning’, while 然 is used for the borrowed meanings.⁵³²

Example 4:

Shuowen: 嘗，口味之也。从旨，尚聲。

Chang 嘗 means ‘to taste’. It is comprised of *kou* 口 (mouth) with *shang* 尚 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 引伸凡經過者為嘗，未經過為未嘗。⁵³³

In terms of its extended meaning, ‘having experienced’ is called ‘*chang* 嘗’, while ‘having not experienced’ is called ‘*weichang* 未嘗’.

Note: The character *chang* 嘗 is originally defined as ‘to taste’ in the *Shuowen*. This meaning can be exemplified by the sentence ‘*qingshi changzhi* 請試嘗之’ (Please have a taste) from *Records of the Grand Historian*, ‘Recorded Histories of Yue’.⁵³⁴ Afterwards, 嘗 was extended to denote ‘to go through or to experience’. Consequently, the phonetic compound 嚐

⁵³⁰ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 485.

⁵³¹ *Mencius* 孟子, trans. Zhao Zhentao 趙甄陶, Zhang Wenting 張文庭, and Zhou Dingzhi 周定之 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), p. 73.

⁵³² Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 886.

⁵³³ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 204.

⁵³⁴ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–ca.86 BCE), *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 244, p. 150.

was formed to carry the sense of ‘tasting something with the mouth’.⁵³⁵

Example 5:

Shuowen: 飪, 食飪也。飪, 大孰也。从卂 臯。

Shu 飪 denotes ‘to eat cooked food’. *Ren* 飪 means the food has been well-cooked. It is comprised of *ji* 卂 (to grasp, to hold) and *shu* 臯 (being cooked, ripe).

Duanzhu: 可食之物大孰, 則卂持食之。高部曰: 「臯, 孰也。」此會意。孰與誰雙聲, 故一曰誰也。後人乃分別熟爲生熟, 孰爲誰孰矣。⁵³⁶

Once food is well-cooked, it can be held to be eaten. The character 臯, with the classifier *xiang* 高 (to present), means ‘being cooked’. The character formation of 飪 applies the method of combining intentions. As *shu* 孰/*djəkʷ/ and *shei* 誰 /*djəd/ (who) are alliterative syllables, 孰 is also used for ‘who’. Consequently, the character *shu* 熟 (熟) was later created to specifically represent ‘being cooked or ripe’, while 孰 represents ‘who’.

Note: The character *shu* 孰 is defined as ‘being cooked or ripe’ in the *Shuowen*. It is exemplified by the sentence ‘*desheng er jiaozun, wugu shishu* 德盛而教尊, 五穀時孰’ (Great virtues enable the teachings to be respected. The five grains ripen timely according to the season) from the *Book of Rites*, ‘Record of Music’.⁵³⁷ Since 孰 was frequently borrowed to represent the interrogative pronoun ‘who’, the phonetic compound ‘*shu* 熟’ was then formed with the classifier *huo* 火 (fire) added to convey the sense of ‘ripe’.⁵³⁸ He Linyi’s *Zhanguo guwen zidian* notes that 孰 is the original character for 熟.⁵³⁹

Example 6:

Shuowen: 莫, 日且冥也。从日在艸中。

Mo 莫 is defined as ‘sunset’. It is comprised of *ri* 日 (sun) and *mang* 艸 (grass cluster), depicting the sun falling into the grass.

Duanzhu: 引伸之義爲有無之無。⁵⁴⁰

莫 was then extended to denote ‘do not have’.

⁵³⁵ Editorial Committee, *Hanyu dazidian* 漢語大字典 [Great Compendium of Chinese Characters] (Chengdu: Sichuan Chengdu chubanshe, 1986), p. 750.

⁵³⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 114.

⁵³⁷ *Liji zhengyi*, p. 1282.

⁵³⁸ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 218.

⁵³⁹ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 206.

⁵⁴⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 48.

Note: *Mo* 莫 is defined as ‘evening’ in the *Shuowen*. This can be exemplified by the sentence ‘*shei suzhi er mucheng* 誰夙知而莫成’ (Who learns early in the morning, but matures late in the evening) from the *Book of Poetry*, ‘Admonition by Duke Wu of Wei’.⁵⁴¹ Later, 莫 was borrowed to mean ‘do not’. Consequently, the classifier *ri* 日 (sun) was added, and thus the phonetic compound *mu* 暮 was formed to signify ‘evening’. Therefore, 莫 is the proto-form of 暮.⁵⁴²

Example 7: In the *Shuowen*, the character *bei* 北 is defined as ‘back or to reverse’, depicting two people back to back.⁵⁴³ It can be exemplified by the sentence ‘*shi wu fanbei zhixin* 士無反北之心’ (Soldiers do not have rebellious intention) from *Records on the Warring States Period*.⁵⁴⁴ Duan offered the following annotation under the character 北, noting that ‘北 is proto-form of *bei* 背. It is also used to signify “north”.’⁵⁴⁵ Since 北 was borrowed for ‘the north direction’, the phonetic compound 背 was later formed to assume the sense of ‘back or rebelling against’. He Linyi notes that 北 is the original character for 背.⁵⁴⁶

Example 8: In the *Shuowen*, the character 解 is defined as ‘to divide’. It is comprised of *dao* 刀 (knife) and *jiao* 角 (horn), denoting ‘to split the horn by knife’.⁵⁴⁷ Its extended meaning is ‘loose or being relaxed’. For example, in the sentence ‘*hulu yixie* 胡虜益解’ (Hu people from barbarian tribes become more and more relaxed and lazy) from *Records of the Grand Historian*, ‘Biography of Commander Li’,⁵⁴⁸ the word 解 means ‘being relaxed’. Later, with the addition of the classifier *xin* 心, *xie* 懈 was formed to convey the extended meaning

⁵⁴¹ *Maoshi zhengyi*, p. 1380.

⁵⁴² Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 63.

⁵⁴³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 390.

⁵⁴⁴ Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–ca.6 BCE), *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 [Records on the Warring States Period], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 406, p. 324.

⁵⁴⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 390.

⁵⁴⁶ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 120.

⁵⁴⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 188.

⁵⁴⁸ Sima Qian, *Shiji*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 244, p. 732.

of ‘being relaxed or idle’. Duan offered the following annotation under the character *xie* 懈 (loose, idle), noting that ‘解 was usually used for 懈 in ancient times.’⁵⁴⁹ During the Warring States periods, 解 was still used for 懈.⁵⁵⁰

Example 9: In the *Shuowen*, the character *hun* 昏 is defined as ‘dusk’. Duan annotated that ‘according to the *Book of Rites*, one is to take up a wife at dusk. This is why “marriage” (*hun* 婚) is called 昏.’⁵⁵¹ *Zhengzi tong* 正字通 (Authority on Correct Characters) also notes that 婚 was written as 昏 in ancient times.⁵⁵² Example can be found in the sentence ‘*chu shi decao er xinhun yuwei* 楚始得曹而新昏於衛’ (State Chu controlled State Cao and united State Wei by marriage) from *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*.⁵⁵³ Subsequently, the phonetic compound *hun* 婚 was formed to specifically convey the sense of ‘marriage’. In the Chu scripts, 昏 is used for 婚.⁵⁵⁴

Example 10: In the *Shuowen*, the character *jing* 竟 is defined as ‘the end of a piece of music composition’. Duan annotated that ‘*jing* 竟 has an extended meaning of “the end of anything”, such as the end of the land, namely, national boundary. *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* uses 竟 to explain the word *jiang* 疆 (boundary).’⁵⁵⁵ It can be exemplified by the sentence ‘*rujing er wenjin* 入竟而問禁’ (When entering a country’s borders, it is necessary to inquire about the bans and taboos of this country) from the *Book of Rites*, ‘*Quli*’.⁵⁵⁶ Later, the

⁵⁴⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 514.

⁵⁵⁰ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 742.

⁵⁵¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 308.

⁵⁵² Zhang Zilie 張自烈 (1597–1673), *Zhengzi tong* 正字通 [Authority on Correct Characters], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 235 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2002), p. 269.

⁵⁵³ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 [Correct Meaning of Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals], commented by Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (502–ca.422 BCE), notes by Du Yu 杜預 (222–285), expanded annotations by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 501.

⁵⁵⁴ Bai Yulan 白於藍, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazhi zidian* 簡牘帛書通假字字典 [Dictionary of Variant Characters in Bamboo and Silk Texts] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2008), p. 348.

⁵⁵⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 103.

⁵⁵⁶ *Liji zhengyi*, p. 101.

character *jing* 境 with the classifier *tu* 土 (earth) attached was formed to convey the sense of ‘boundary’. *Ziyuan* notes that 竟 was used for 境 in ancient times.⁵⁵⁷

Example 11:

Shuowen: 辟, 法也。从卩, 从辛, 節制其辜也; 从口, 用法者也。

辟 denotes ‘law’. It is comprised of *jie* 卩 (to seal, to restrain), *xin* 辛 (bitter, crime), and *kou* 口 (mouth), meaning the restraint of someone from committing a crime. The component 口 denotes ‘the announcement of law’.

Duanzhu: 或借爲「僻」, 或借爲「避」, 或借爲「譬」, 或借爲「闢」, 或借爲「壁」。⁵⁵⁸

辟 can be borrowed for *pi* 僻 (remote), *bi* 避 (to avoid), *pi* 譬 (to compare), *pi* 闢 (to develop), or *bi* 壁 (wall).

Note: In ancient texts, 辟 is often borrowed to signify ‘to avoid’ (避), ‘to develop’ (闢), or ‘to compare’ (譬). Examples can be found in *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*. In the sentence ‘*jiangshi yuzhi, yan bihai* 姜氏欲之, 焉辟害’ (Ms. Jiang would like to do so. How could I avoid the harm?)⁵⁵⁹ and ‘*qinmen piyi* 寢門辟矣’ (The door of the bedroom is open),⁵⁶⁰ the word 辟 denotes ‘to avoid’ and ‘to open’ respectively. In the sentence ‘*piru xingyuan bi zier* 辟如行遠必自邇’ (The way of the superior man may be compared to what takes place in travelling, when to go to a distance we must first traverse the space that is near) from the *Doctrine of the Mean*,⁵⁶¹ 辟 means ‘be compared to’. These examples validate Duan’s assertion that 辟 was used for various senses, including ‘to avoid’, ‘to open’, and ‘be compared to’, in addition to ‘law’. Later, phonetic compounds 避 (to avoid), 闢 (to open), and 譬 (to compare) were created to specifically carry the meanings which were previously conveyed by 辟. In the *Chu* scripts, 辟 is used for 譬 and 避.⁵⁶²

Many phonetic elements serve as the proto-forms of phonetic compounds, created much

⁵⁵⁷ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 1196.

⁵⁵⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 437.

⁵⁵⁹ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengy*, p. 61.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 685.

⁵⁶¹ *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge, vol. I, p. 396.

⁵⁶² Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazhi zidian*, p. 197.

earlier and containing the source of the meaning of the phonetic compounds. Hence, some phonetic elements serve as cultural residues, reflecting the life of ancient Chinese people and providing insight into ancient Chinese culture and customs. Through the source-indicating feature of the phonetic element, we can have a glimpse of ancient Chinese society. As noted by Handel, writing is a cultural and political phenomenon integrated into all manifestations of civilisation and human cultural expression.⁵⁶³

For example:

Shuowen: 人所生也。古之神聖母，感天而生子，故稱天子。从女，从生，生亦聲。
《春秋傳》曰：「天子因生以賜姓。」

The character *xing* 姓 (surname) denotes ‘what a person is born (*sheng* 生) with’. The mothers of ancient sages responded to Heaven and gave birth to their sons; hence they are called the Sons of Heaven. 姓 combines the senses of *nü* 女 (woman) and 生 (birth). 生 also stands for the sound. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* states that ‘emperors bestow surname according to the birth’.

Duanzhu: 因生以爲姓，若下文神農母居姜水因以爲姓，黃帝母居姬水因以爲姓，舜母居姚虛因以爲姓是也。感天而生者母也。故姓从女生會意。⁵⁶⁴

Surname (姓) is determined by birth (生). The surname of Shen Nong (the legendary god of farming) is Jiang because his mother lived near the River Jiang. The surname of the Yellow Emperor is Ji because his mother lived near the River Ji. The surname of Emperor Shun is Yao because his mother lived at a place called Yaoxu. Mother is the one who responded to Heaven and gave birth to a child. Thereby, the character 姓 (surname) combines the intentions of 女 (woman) and 生 (birth).’

Note: According to the above statements, it can be inferred that the phonetic element 生 of 姓 indicates the origin of the ancient surname. In the Chu scripts of the Warring States period, 生 (birth) is used for the surname (姓).⁵⁶⁵

Another example:

Shuowen: 禮，履也。所以事神致福也。从示，从豊，豊亦聲。

Li 禮 means ‘to conduct’; it is what is used to serve the spirits and to bring forth

⁵⁶³ Zev Handel, *Sinography: The Borrowing and Adaption of the Chinese Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 3.

⁵⁶⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 618.

⁵⁶⁵ Feng Shengjun 馮盛君, *Guodian jian yu shangbo jian duibi yanjiu* 郭店簡與上博簡對比研究 [A Comparative Study of the Guodian Manuscripts and the Shanghai Museum Manuscripts] (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2007), pp. 209–210.

blessings.⁵⁶⁶ 禮 combines the intentions of *shi* 示 (issuing signs) and *li* 豊 (a vessel used in sacrificing). 豊 also indicates the sound.

Duanzhu: 禮有五經，莫重於祭。故禮字从示。豊者，行禮之器。⁵⁶⁷

Ceremonies are categorised into five kinds, with none more significant than sacrifices.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, the character 禮 contains the intention of 示. 豊 denotes ‘a vessel used in sacrificing’.

Note: The phonetic element 豊 denotes ‘a vessel used in sacrificing’, suggesting that offering sacrifices might be the origin of rituals and ceremonies. That is why Duan quoted the *Book of Rites* and emphasised the importance of sacrifices among the five kinds of ceremonies. According to He Linyi’s *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, 豊 is the original character for 禮.⁵⁶⁹

The aforementioned phonetic compounds are constructed with classifiers attached to the phonetic elements, which often encapsulate the etymon of the character. The phonetic element serves as the bond connecting the new character and the old character. The classifier serves as the mark that distinguishes the new character from the old one. However, there is another kind of phonetic compounds whose phonetic elements are later added. These characters are created by adding a phonetic element to a proto-form, with the phonetic element denoting pronunciation but bearing no meaning. Duan’s theory does not apply to this type of phonetic compounds. However, Duan did not give any elaborations on these cases as he lacked access to related materials such as oracle bone inscriptions during his time. Thus, he was unclear about the derivation of this kind of phonetic compounds. The following are some examples.

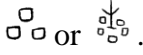

Example 1: The character *xing* 星 (star) is written as *xing* 暈 in the *Shuowen*. It is


⁵⁶⁶ Translation quoted from: William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 155.

⁵⁶⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁸ The five kinds of ceremonies are the Auspicious (including all acts of religious worship); the Mourning; those of Hospitality; the Military; and the Festive. Internet Sacred Text Archive, the *Book of Rites*, trans. James Legge (1885). Last modified November 2000. Accessed 7 May 2024. <https://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/like2/like222.htm>.

⁵⁶⁹ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 1261.

comprised of *jing* 晶 (glittering) with *sheng* 生 (birth) as the phonetic.⁵⁷⁰ The oracle bone inscription of 星 is written as  or . In ancient times, the words for glittering (晶) and star (星) are written in the same form.⁵⁷¹ Later, with the addition of the phonetic element 生, 星 (星) specifically describes ‘star’, while 晶 denotes ‘glittering’. 生 /*sring/ and 星 /*sing/ have the same initial /*s-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of *geng* 耕 /*-ing/. The phonetic element 生 only denotes the pronunciation of 星 but carries no meaning. It is used solely to differentiate the meaning of ‘star’ from 晶.

Example 2: In the *Shuowen*, the character *shan* 羴 /*hngrian/ denotes ‘odour of sheep’. Its variant form 羴 /*sthjan/ is comprised of *yang* 羊 (sheep) and *dan* 𧇗 (a large quantity of grain).⁵⁷² While the oracle bone inscription shows only the form  for 羴, there is no relevant form for 羴.⁵⁷³ 𧇗 /*tjan/ and 羴 /*sthjan/ share similar initial sounds and have the same final sound. It could be suggested that *shan* 羴 is a later derived compound with the phonetic element 𧇗 indicating the pronunciation. Sound change may motivate the creation of a new phonetic compound to suit the contemporary pronunciation, but the new phonetic compound did not necessarily replace the old one.⁵⁷⁴

Example 3: In the *Shuowen*, the character *wang* 尪 denotes ‘crippled’. Its variant form is written as *wang* 尪. Duan annotated that ‘尪 is a pictograph in the form of ancient script, while 尪 is a phonetic compound in small seal script.’⁵⁷⁵ As ancient script predates small seal script,⁵⁷⁶ it could be suggested that 尪 /*·wang/ was later created with the addition of the phonetic element *huang* 隹 /*gwjiang/ (luxuriant) to 尪 /*·wang/. 隹 only denotes the sound.

⁵⁷⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 315.

⁵⁷¹ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 2, p. 1327.




⁵⁷² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 149.




⁵⁷³ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 2, p. 1514.

⁵⁷⁴ Haeree Park, ‘Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts’, *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63. 4 (2009): 880.

⁵⁷⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 499.

⁵⁷⁶ ‘Ancient script’ refers to the scripts of the Six States. (403–ca.221 BCE)

Example 4: In the *Shuowen*, the character *feng* 鳳 /*bjəm/ denotes ‘phoenix’. It is comprised of *niao* 鳥 (bird) with *fan* 凡 /*bjəm/ (all, common) as the phonetic.⁵⁷⁷ Its oracle bone inscription is written as , which is a pictograph depicting the shape of a phoenix. Another form of its oracle bone inscription is written as , which is a phonetic compound. The phonetic element 凡  was later added to denote the sound.⁵⁷⁸

Example 5: Similarly, the character *ji* 雞 /*kig/ (chicken) is comprised of *zhui* 隹 (short-tailed bird) with *xi* 奚 /*gig/ (big belly, servant) as the phonetic.⁵⁷⁹ Its oracle bone inscription is written as , which is a pictograph depicting the shape of a chicken. Another form of 雞 is written as . The phonetic element 奚  was later added to denote the sound.⁵⁸⁰ Moreover, the original forms of *ji* 雞 and *feng* 鳳 are pictographs that closely resemble each other. To differentiate them from graphical similarity, the phonetic elements ‘凡’ and ‘奚’ were later added. These phonetic elements solely denote sound and do not carry any meaning.

4.4 Homonyms or Near Homonyms Often Have a Similar Meaning

As a character’s meaning is contained in its sound, homonyms or near homonyms often share similar meanings. Regarding this principle, ‘homonyms or near homonyms’ includes the characters with the same phonetic element as well as the ones sharing the same or similar pronunciation. Duan illustrated this principle in his annotation for the character *si* 嘶.

Shuowen: 嘶, 悲聲也。从言, 斯省聲。

Si 嘶 means ‘mournful sound’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *si* 斯 as its abbreviated phonetic element.

Duanzhu: 斯, 析也。澌, 水索也。凡同聲多同義。鍇曰: 「今謂馬悲鳴為嘶。」

⁵⁷⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 149.

⁵⁷⁸ Zhao Cheng 趙誠, *Jiagu wenzixue gangyao* 甲骨文字學綱要 [Outline of Oracle Bone Inscriptions Studies] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), p. 194.

⁵⁷⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 143.

⁵⁸⁰ Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen zidian*, p. 394.

Si 斯 means ‘to split’ (*xi* 析). *Si* 澌 means ‘to dry up’ (*shuisuo* 水索). Homonyms often have similar meanings. Xu Kai noted that ‘*si* 嘶 signifies the neighing of a horse’.⁵⁸²

Note: The character 斯 is defined as ‘to split’ in *Guangya* 廣雅 (Expanding Standard). In his *Guangya shuzheng*, Wang Niansun offered the following annotation under 斯, noting that ‘it is commonly said that 斯 means “to tear something apart with hands”.’⁵⁸³ Xu Hao commented under Duan’s annotation for *si* 澌 (*shuisuo* 水索, to dry up) that ‘*suo* 索 means “to deplete”. For instance, the word *sousuo* 搜索 indicates “searching thoroughly without anything left out”.’⁵⁸⁴ *Si* 嘶 denotes ‘mournful voice’ and thus the voice is gravel and cracked. In conclusion, the characters 斲, 澌, and 嘶 with 斯 as their shared phonetic element are related to the notion of ‘splitting, dissolving, or depleting’. As meaning can be traced through sound, homonyms often have similar meanings.

Other examples related to this principle in the *Duanzhu* are as follows:

Example 1:

Shuowen: 晤，明也，从日，吾聲。

Wu 晤 means ‘light or clear’. It is comprised of *ri* 日 (sun) with *wu* 吾 (pronoun of me) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 啟之明也。心部之「悟」、寤部之「寤」，皆訓覺。覺亦明也。同聲之義必相近。⁵⁸⁵

Wu 晤 means ‘to enlighten someone to be clear about something’. Both ‘*wu* 悟’ (to understand) with the classifier ‘*xin* 心’ (heart-mind) and ‘*wu* 寤’ (to awaken) with the

⁵⁸¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 101.

⁵⁸² The *Shuowen jiezi* has suffered from an unhappy history of transmission. Tang scholar Li Yangbing 李陽冰 (fl.766) was known unfavourably for his thorough reworking of the original text along lines of his own concocting. The Xu brothers, Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916–991) and Xu Kai 徐鍇 (920–974), from the state of Southern Tang 南唐 (937–975) did their best to restore and elucidate the text. The former concentrated on the text itself with his *Shuowen jiezi daxu ben* 說文解字大徐本 (Collated and Finalised *Shuowen jiezi*), which added *fanqie* readings according to *Tangyun* 唐韻 (Tang Rhyme), and appended graphs not included in the original. The latter produced an interpretive analysis of each entry, entitled *Shuowen xizhuan* 說文繫傳 (Filiations of and Commentary on the *Shuowen jiezi*). It was on the basis of Xu Xuan’s text that Duan Yucai produced his *Duanzhu*. See David B. Honey, *A History of Chinese Classical Scholarship*, vol. II, p. 216.

⁵⁸³ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 43.

⁵⁸⁴ Xu Hao, *Shuowen jiezi zhujian*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 226, p. 441.

⁵⁸⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 306.

classifier ‘*meng* 寤’ (dream) imply ‘becoming aware’, corresponding to the sense of ‘awakening or clear’. Therefore, homonyms must have similar meanings.

Note: The characters 晤, 悟, and 寤 share identical pronunciation denoted by their shared phonetic element 吾. Thus, they are semantically connected. Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian* classifies 寤 and 悟 as cognate words related to the sense of ‘awakening’.⁵⁸⁶ Yin Jiming also classifies 晤, 悟, and 寤 as cognate words sharing the meaning of ‘awakening’.⁵⁸⁷ However, Duan’s use of the word ‘must’ in the sentence ‘homonyms must have similar meanings’ is somewhat arbitrary, as not all homonyms have the same meaning. For example, *wu* 牾 (to oppose) and *wu* 忤 (rebellious) are related to ‘to violate’ rather than ‘to awaken’.⁵⁸⁸

Example 2:

Shuowen: 歟，安气也。从欠，與聲。

Yu 歟 is defined as ‘to breathe calmly’. It is comprised of *qian* 欠 (to exhale) with *yu* 與 (to give, to grant) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 如趨為安行，騫為馬行疾而徐，音同義相近也。今用為語末之辭，亦取安舒之意，通作與。⁵⁸⁹

Yu 趨 denotes ‘to walk calmly’. *Yu* 騫 means ‘horse running quickly and then slowing down’. These two characters are homonyms and share similar meanings. Presently, *yu* 歟 is commonly used as a final interrogative particle due to its connotation of calmness.

Yu 歟 is also written as *yu* 與.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 袒，衣縫解也。

Tan 袒 means ‘ripped seam’.

Duanzhu: 袒為衣縫解，故从衣。組為補縫，故从糸。音同而義相因也。⁵⁹⁰

Tan 袒 means ‘ripped seam’. Thus, it has *yi* 衣 (clothes) as its classifier. *Zhan* 組 means ‘to mend clothes’ and thus it has *mi* 糸 (silk) as its classifier. As 袒 and 組 are pronounced the same, they are semantically connected.

The examples provided above are homonyms with the same phonetic element sharing similar meanings. Duan’s principle that ‘homonyms or near homonyms often have a similar

⁵⁸⁶ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 135.

⁵⁸⁷ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 2, p. 640.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 637.

⁵⁸⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 415.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 399.

meaning’ is not limited to characters sharing the same phonetic element; it also extends to characters with different phonetic elements but with similar or identical pronunciations. For instance, Duan’s annotation for the character *qin* 欽 suggests that *qin* 欽 (deficient), *kan* 歎 (not satisfied with food), *kan* 歛 (feeling insufficient), and *qian* 歉 (deficiency) are either alliterative or rhymed with each other, hence they share a sense of ‘being humble or receptive’.⁵⁹¹ 欽 /*khjəm/, 歎 /*khamx/, 歛 /*gamx/, and 歉 /*khriamh/ have similar initial consonants, characterised by velar sounds, and they conclude with the same nasal coda /*-m/. Moreover, 歎, 歛, and 歉 also belong to the same rhyme group of *tan* 談 /*-am/. The characters 欽, 歎, 歛, and 歉, despite having different phonetic elements, share similar pronunciations and are semantically related to one another.

In his *Ziyi qiyu ziyin shuo* 字義起於字音說 (The Theory of the Meaning of a Character Deriving from the Sound of a Character), Liu Shipai explained the principle that ancient people named objects with similar images using the same sound. During the inception of character creation, meaning held more significance than form. Therefore, there was no necessity to create separate characters with the same sound (stem), as they can be represented by their shared phonetic element. Since corresponding phonetic compounds were created, their meanings were still contained in their pronunciations. Therefore, phonetic compounds sharing the same phonetic element often convey similar meanings.⁵⁹² Liu further contended that ‘any phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element can be interchangeably used. Moreover, homonyms can represent the same meaning even if their phonetic elements differ’.

⁵⁹¹ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 415.

⁵⁹² Liu Mengxi, *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu jingdian*, p. 654. The original Chinese text is: ‘試觀古人名物，凡義象相同，所從之聲亦同。則以造字之初，重義略形。故數字同從一聲者，即該於所從得聲之字，不必物各一字也。及增益偏旁，物各一字，其義仍寄於字聲。故所從之聲同，則所取之義亦同。’

⁵⁹³ Liu's assertions elucidate the rationale behind Duan's principle that 'homonyms often share similar meanings'. It indicates that Duan's principle transcends the confines of phonetic compounds sharing the same phonetic element. It is equally applicable to characters that possess different phonetic elements yet share the same or similar pronunciation.

Zhao Zhenduo observes that in the *Duanzhu*, there are approximately two hundred references to characters with similar pronunciations having similar meanings.⁵⁹⁴ The examples below exemplify the semantic relationships between characters that share similar or identical pronunciations, whether they are homonyms, alliterative syllables, or rhymed syllables.

4.4.1 Homonyms Which Are Semantically Related

Statements such as 'the characters share the same sound and meaning' (*Yinyi jietong* 音義皆同) and 'the characters share the same pronunciation and can thus be used interchangeably' (*Tongyin tongyong* 同音通用) are commonly seen in the *Duanzhu*. For instance, the character *ming* 冥 is explained as *yao* 窈 in the *Shuowen*. Duan noted that '窈 means "far-reaching or dark". Since *yao* 窈 /*·iəgwɣ/ and *yao* 杳 /*·iəgwɣ/ (deep, dark) are the same in sound and meaning, 杳 is glossed as 冥.'⁵⁹⁵ Duan also offered the following annotation under the character *da* 達 /*that/ (to reach), noting that 'it shares the same sound and meaning as *hua* 滑 /*kwət/ (slippery) and *tai* 泰 /*thadh/ (smooth).'⁵⁹⁶ Although 達 /*that/ and 泰/*thadh/ have similar pronunciations in Old Chinese, 達 /*that/ and 滑 /*kwət/ differ in both initials and finals. Thus, it is inaccurate for Duan to connect 達 with 滑 through sound. Similar annotation

⁵⁹³ Liu Shippei *quanji*, vol. 1, p. 428. The original Chinese text is: '凡同聲之字，古人皆可通用也。且同義之字不必右旁之聲同也，即任舉同聲之字亦可用為同義。'

⁵⁹⁴ Zhao Zhenduo, *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi*, p. 462.

⁵⁹⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 314.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 73.

can be found under the character *zhou* 喙 that ‘the characters *zhuo* 啄 /*truk/ (beak, peck), *zhou* 喙 /*trjugh/ (beak), and *zhuo* 啄 /*truk/ (peck) are near homonyms and are used interchangeably by people of our time.’⁵⁹⁷ 喙, 喙, and 啄 have the same initial consonant /*t-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of *hou* 候 /*-uk/, /*-ug/. Thus, they are near homonyms in Old Chinese.

Shen Jianshi also suggested that characters with different graphic forms might share similar meanings due to phonetic association. For example, while the phonetic element of *di* 地 (earth) is *ye* 也 (likewise, final article) rather than *di* 氏 (ground, foundation), 地 is semantically linked to ‘*di* 低’ (low) and ‘*di* 底’ (bottom). Another homonyms (*di* 弟), which denotes ‘the younger brother relative to the elder brother’, is also pronounced as *di* since it is associated with ‘low and junior’ (低). The character *di* 帝 (emperor) conveys the sense of ‘top-down’. Hence, the examination from the superior is called *dishi* 諦視. Other characters such as *zhai* 摘 /*trik/ (to pick up), *zhe* 謫 /*trik/ (to degrade, to banish), and *di* 滴 /*tik/ (to drop), with *di* 帝 /*tigh/ as their phonetic radical (*zigen* 字根), also indicate the movement from top to bottom.⁵⁹⁸ Therefore, the phoneme *dee* represents the sense of ‘bottom or top-down’. Regardless of whether it is written as *di* 氏 /*tid/, *di* 地 /*diarh/, *di* 弟 /*didh/, *di* 諦 /*tigh/, or *di* 滴 /*tik/, it can be noted that these characters originate from the same etymon and share similar meanings.⁵⁹⁹ Although the above homonyms presented by Shen Jianshi have different phonetic elements, namely 氏 /*tid/, 也 /*riagx/, and 帝 /*tigh/, they share the same phoneme ‘*dee*’ (/ *ti/, /*di/), which conveys the sense of ‘bottom or base’. *Dee* serves as the etymon from which the origin of this group of characters can be traced.

The following are further examples:

⁵⁹⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 62.

⁵⁹⁸ Phonetic radical refers to the original phonetic element of a phonetic compound.

⁵⁹⁹ Shen Jianshi, ‘Youwenshuo zai xunguxue shang zhi yange jiqi tuichan’, p. 806.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 鼗，大鼓謂之鼗。鼗八尺而兩面，以鼓軍事。从鼓，卉聲。

Fen 鼗 stands for ‘big drum’. It is about eight feet high and has two sides. It is used for military purposes. The character is comprised of *gu* 鼓 (drum) with *hui* 卉 (general term for plants) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡貴聲字多訓大。如《毛傳》云：「墳，大防也。頒，大首兒。汾，大也」皆是。卉聲與貴聲一也。⁶⁰⁰

Characters pronounced as ‘*fen* 貴’ (large, ornate) often carry the sense of ‘big or large’. *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* states that ‘*fen* 墳 means big dyke.’ The character *ban* 頒 implies ‘big-headed’, while *fen* 汾 means ‘large’. Characters pronounced as ‘*hui* 卉’ are equivalent to those pronounced as ‘*fen* 貴’ in conveying the meaning of ‘big’.

Note: The phonetic compounds 墳 /*bjən /, 頒 /*bjən /, and 汾 /*bjən/ presented by Duan share the same pronunciation in Old Chinese. The sound association among 墳, 頒, and 汾 contributes to their shared sense of ‘big or large’.

Example 2: In the *Shuowen*, the character *mao* 楸 is defined as ‘trees growing freely and abundantly’.⁶⁰¹ *Mao* 茂 is defined as ‘plants and trees growing freely’.⁶⁰² Duan noted that ‘楸 has a similar sound and meaning as *mao* 茂. The difference between the two characters lies in that one depicts trees while the other depicts grass.’⁶⁰³ 楸 /*mugh/ and 茂 /*məghw/ share the same initial consonant /*m-/ , and similar codas, which are velar sounds. They have similar pronunciations and convey the same meaning of ‘thriving or luxuriant’. Wang Li notes in his *Tongyuan zidian* that 楸 and 茂 represent the same word.⁶⁰⁴

Example 3: In the *Shuowen*, the character *li* 吏 is explained as ‘the person who administers others’,⁶⁰⁵ while *li* 理 denotes ‘to carve the jade’.⁶⁰⁶ The characters *li* 吏 /*ljəgh/ and *li* 理 /*ljəgx/ are homonyms and both mean ‘to administer or to manage’. 吏 refers to the

⁶⁰⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 208.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, p. 274.

⁶⁰² Ibid, p. 39.

⁶⁰³ Ibid, p. 274.

⁶⁰⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 250.

⁶⁰⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 15.

management of people, whereas 理 refers to the ‘management’ of stone.

Example 4: In the *Shuowen*, the character *yuan* 爰 is defined as ‘to pull’. It is borrowed for *yuan* 輶 in the big seal script. Duan annotated that ‘爰 has the same sound and meaning as *yuan* 援 (pulling by hand)... The character *yuan* 輶 denotes “the shafts of a cart which are used for pulling a carriage”. Hence, the big seal script of 輶 is written as 爰.’⁶⁰⁷ As 爰 is the phonetic element of 援, there is no doubt that 爰 and 援 are related in sound and meaning. Although 輶 /*gwjan/ and 援 /*gwjan/ have different phonetic elements, they are homonyms and both linked to the sense of ‘pulling’.

4.4.2 Characters Which Are Alliterative Syllables and Have Similar Meanings

Duan offered the following annotation under the character *luo* 纒 (uneven, silk with knots), noting that ‘*luo* 纒 and *lei* 纒 (knot in silk thread, defect) are alliterative syllables. The two characters have similar meanings.’⁶⁰⁸ Since *luo* 纒 /*luarh/ and *lei* 纒 /*lædh/ have the same initial consonant /*l-/, they are semantically related to each other. The following provides more examples of ‘alliterative syllables which have similar meanings’ in the *Shuowen* according to the articulation place of the initial of character:

4.4.2.1 Alliterative Syllables Which Are Labial

The examples below illustrate the alliterative syllables containing initial consonants which are labial.

Example 1:

In the *Shuowen*, Duan quoted *Mao’s Commentary* and annotated under the character *bing* 秉 that ‘秉 means “to hold” (*ba* 把).’⁶⁰⁹ 秉 /*pjiangx/ and 把 /*pragx/ have the same initial

⁶⁰⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 162.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 654.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 116.

consonant, which is the bilabial stop /*p-/. Additionally, they have the same main vowel /*-a/ and their codas are both velar. They are cognate words, and both relate to the sense of ‘holding’.⁶¹⁰

Example 2:

Shuowen: 八，別也。象分別相背之形。

The character *ba* 八 is defined as ‘to divide’, mimicking the shape of ‘being opposite to each other’.

Duanzhu: 此以雙聲、疊韻說其義。⁶¹¹

Here (Xu Shen) uses alliteration or rhyming to explain the meaning (of 八).

Shuowen: 分，別也。从八刀，刀以分別物也。⁶¹²

The character *fen* 分 is defined as ‘to separate’, combining the intentions of *ba* 八 (to divide) and *dao* 刀 (knife). Knife is used to separate things.

Shuowen: 半，物中分也。从八，从牛。牛爲物大，可以分也。⁶¹³

The character *ban* 半 signifies ‘a thing divided in the middle’ or ‘the half of anything’. It is comprised of *ba* 八 (to divide) and *niu* 牛 (cow). A cow is large and thus can be divided.

Shuowen: 必，分極也。从八弋，弋亦聲。⁶¹⁴

The character *bi* 必 denotes ‘the standard of division’. It is comprised of *ba* 八 (to divide) and *yi* 弋 (a sharpened stake which is used to divide things). 弋 also indicates the sound.

Note: 八 /*priat/, 分 /*pjən/, 半 /*panh/, and 必 /*pjit/ have the same initial consonant,

which is the bilabial stop /*p-/. They all relate to the sense of ‘dividing’.

4.4.2.2 Alliterative Syllables Which Are Lingual

Duan provided the following annotation under the character *tuo* 妥, noting that ‘*tuo* 妥 (to settle down), *tui* 蛻 (to shed), *tuo* 脫 (to peel off), and *tuo* 毳 (to moult) have similar sounds and meanings. They are all alliterative syllables with the initial consonants which are lingual.


⁶¹⁰ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 175.

⁶¹¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 49.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Ibid, p. 50.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

Huatuo 花妥 means “flowers falling off”. Once things have fallen to the ground, they are rested on the ground.’⁶¹⁵ The character 𧈧 is not collected in the *Shuowen*. One of its ancient scripts is written as  with *dui* 兑 /*duadh/ as its phonetic element.⁶¹⁶ 妥 /*hnuarx/, 蛻 /*thuadh/, 脫 /*thuat/, and 𧈧 /*thuadh/ share similar initials, which are tongue-head sounds.⁶¹⁷ Additionally, they have the same medial /*-u-/ and main vowel /*-a/. They share a similar pronunciation and are semantically related to one another. The following are two further examples of the alliterative syllables containing initial consonants which are lingual.

Example 1: The characters *shou* 首 /*hrjəgwɣ/ (head, first), *tou* 頭 /*dug/ (head, top), *ti* 題 /*dig/ (forehead, title), *ding* 頂 /*tingx/ (top, peak), and *dian* 顛 /*tin/ (top, summit) share similarities in their initials, which are tongue-head sounds, and they are associated with the concept of ‘top’. Huang Kan posited that characters representing the idea of ‘top’ predominantly feature tongue-head sounds, exemplified by 頭, 顛, 頂, and 題.⁶¹⁸

Example 2: In the *Shuowen*, Duan annotated under the character *di* 蒂 (the stem by which fruit hangs in a bundle) that 蒂 and *di* 抵 can be interchangeably used in ancient texts.⁶¹⁹ 蒂 means the base of a fruit, while 抵 denotes ‘the base of a tree’. 蒂 /*tiadh/ and 抵 /*tidx/ have the same initial /*t-/ and coda /*-d/. They are semantically related.

4.4.2.3 Alliterative Syllables Which Are Velar

The following Tables (Table 1, 2, and 3) are pairs of alliterative syllables containing initial

⁶¹⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 632.

⁶¹⁶ Xu Zaiguo 徐在國, *Chuanchao guwenzi bian* 傳抄古文字編 [Compilation of the Ancient Scripts in Manuscripts], vol. 2 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2006), p. 839.

⁶¹⁷ In terms of Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction system, the suffix /*-s/ has a function of deriving nouns from verbs. In this example, through the addition of suffix /*-s/, the noun *tui* 蛻 /*hlot-s/ (exuviae of insects) was derived from the verb *tuo* 脫 /*hlot/ (to take off). Moreover, the departing tone of *tui* 蛻 in Middle Chinese derived from the suffix /*-s/. See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, ‘Word Formation in Old Chinese’, *New Approaches to Chinese Word Formation*, ed. by Jerome Packard (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), p. 57.

⁶¹⁸ Huang Zhuo, *Huang Kan wenzi shengyun xungu biji*, p. 187.

⁶¹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 39.

consonants which are velar. The two characters in each pair share similar meanings.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>geng</i> 更	/*krang/	<i>Shuowen</i> : 更 denotes ‘to change’ (改). ⁶²⁰	share the same initial consonant /*k-/
<i>gai</i> 改	/*kəgx/	<i>Shuowen</i> : 改 denotes ‘to alter’ (更). ⁶²¹ <i>Duanzhu</i> : 改 and 更 are alliterative syllables.	

Table 1

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>kuan</i> 寬	/*khwan/	spacious house ⁶²²	share the same initial consonant /*khw-/ and the same main vowel /*-a/
<i>kuo</i> 闊	/*khwat/	broad ⁶²³	

Table 2

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>jie</i> 皆	/*krid/	<i>Shuowen</i> : 皆 denotes ‘all’ (俱). <i>Duanzhu</i> : 皆 and 俱 are mutually explanatory. ⁶²⁴	share the same initial consonant /*k-/
<i>ju</i> 俱	/*kjug/	<i>Shuowen</i> : 俱 denotes ‘whole’ (皆). ⁶²⁵	

Table 3

4.4.2.4 Alliterative Syllables Which Are Dental

The initial consonants of the characters, illustrated in Table 4 and 5, are dental sounds. The characters in each group share similar meanings.

⁶²⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 125.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Ibid, p. 344.

⁶²³ Ibid, p. 597.

⁶²⁴ Ibid, p. 138.

⁶²⁵ Ibid, p. 376.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>zu</i> 族	/*dzuk /	<i>Shuowen</i> : 族 denotes ‘a bundle of arrowheads gathered together’. <i>Duanzhu</i> : It is extended to denote ‘to gather together’. ⁶²⁶	share the same initial consonant /*dz-/
<i>ju</i> 聚	/*dzjugh/	<i>Shuowen</i> : 聚 denotes ‘to assemble’. ⁶²⁷	

Table 4

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>xiao</i> 小	/*sjagwx/	small, tiny ⁶²⁸	similar in initials which are dental sibilant sounds.
<i>xi</i> 細	/*sidh/	fine, minute ⁶²⁹	
<i>xian</i> 纖	/*sjam/	fine, delicate ⁶³⁰	
<i>jian</i> 旣	/*tsjəm/	point, tip ⁶³¹	

Table 5

4.4.2.5 Alliterative Syllables Which Are Laryngeal

The initial consonants of the characters, illustrated in Table 6 and 7, are laryngeal and share similar meanings.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>yi</i> 翳	/*·igh/	<i>Shuowen</i> : 翳 denotes ‘feather cover’. <i>Duanzhu</i> : It is extended to denote ‘to cover or to conceal’. ⁶³²	share the same initial consonant which is a glottal stop /*·-/
<i>yin</i> 隱	/*·jənx/	to hide or to conceal. ⁶³³	

Table 6

⁶²⁶ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 315.

⁶²⁷ Ibid, p. 391.

⁶²⁸ Ibid, p. 49.

⁶²⁹ Ibid, p. 653.

⁶³⁰ Ibid, p. 652.

⁶³¹ Ibid, p. 410.

⁶³² Ibid, p. 142.

⁶³³ Ibid, p. 741.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
yi 依	/*·jəd/	to rely on (倚) ⁶³⁴	share the same initial consonant which is a glottal stop /*·-/
yi 倚	/*·jarx/	to depend on (依) ⁶³⁵	

Table 7

4.4.3 Characters Which Are Rhymed Syllables and Have Similar Meanings

Aside from alliteration, characters that rhyme with each other also share a similar meaning. For instance, Duan offered the following annotation under the character *qiu* 逌 (to gather), noting that ‘*jiu* 匊 means “to assemble”. It is similar to 逌 in both sound and meaning.’⁶³⁶ 逌 /*gjəgw/ and 匊 /*kjəgw/ belong to the same rhyme group of *you* 幽 /*-əgw/. Additionally, they also have similar initial consonants, which are velar sounds.

In another example, Duan offered the following annotation under the character *jiu* 玖 (black-coloured jade), noting that ‘since 玖 has a similar pronunciation to *you* 黝 (black), it is associated with the sense of black.’⁶³⁷ Although 玖 /*kjəgx/ and 黝 /*·jiəgwɣ/ belong to different rhyme groups, they share the same main vowel and both have velar codas. Thus, they share similar finals and are semantically related to the sense of ‘black’.

Table 8, 9, 10, and 11 below show the examples of groups of characters which belong to the same rhyme group and have similar meanings.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
fei 非	/*pjəd/	not ⁶³⁸	belong to the same rhyme group of 微 /*-əd/
wei 韋	/*gwjəd/	to perverse ⁶³⁹	

Table 8

⁶³⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 225.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, p. 16.

⁶³⁷ Ibid, p. 74.

⁶³⁸ Ibid, p. 588.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, p. 237.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>quan</i> 全	/*dzjuan/	interpreted as ‘ <i>wan</i> 完’ (to complete) based on rhyming. ⁶⁴⁰	belong to the same rhyme group of 元 /*-an/
<i>wan</i> 完	/*gwan/	interpreted as ‘ <i>quan</i> 全’ (whole) based on rhyming. ⁶⁴¹	

Table 9

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>huang</i> 晃	/*gwanx/	bright, dazzling ⁶⁴²	belong to the same rhyme group of 陽 /*-ang/ and have similar initial consonants, which are velar sounds.
<i>huang</i> 煌	/*gwan/	shinning, brilliant ⁶⁴³	
<i>kuang</i> 曠	/*kwangx/	vast and bright ⁶⁴⁴	
<i>guang</i> 光	/*kwangh/	light, bright ⁶⁴⁵	

Table 10

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Explanation in the <i>Shuowen</i>	Phonetic relationship
<i>yin</i> 引	/*rinx/	<i>Shuowen</i> : 引 means ‘to pull the bow’. <i>Duanzhu</i> : It has an extended meaning associated with ‘stretching or leading’. ⁶⁴⁶	belong to the same rhyme group of 真 /*-in/
<i>shen</i> 伸	/*sthjin/	to extend ⁶⁴⁷	

Table 11

From the above examples, we can see that characters with different forms may have similar meanings due to similarity in pronunciation. Sound helps us to discover potential etymological connections between characters.

⁶⁴⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 226.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid, p. 343.

⁶⁴² Ibid, p. 306.

⁶⁴³ Ibid, p. 490.

⁶⁴⁴ Chen Pengnian, *Xinjiao songben guangyun*, p. 315.

⁶⁴⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 490.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 646.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 381.

4.5 Characters Sharing a Given Phonetic Element Often Share a Given Meaning

In the *Duanzhu*, many sentences underscore that characters sharing a given phonetic element often share a given meaning. Modern scholar Shen Jianshi 沈兼士 employed ax, bx, cx, and dx to represent a series of phonetic compounds, all containing a shared semanteme represented by x, the phonetic element. X serves as the common gloss of this *xiesheng* series.⁶⁴⁸ In her work *Gudai hanyu* 古代漢語 (Ancient Chinese), Wang Ning 王寧 also observes that characters with the same phonetic element are interconnected in meaning. This assertion finds ample support in examples such as the characters *pao* 泡 (bubble), *bao* 苞 (bud), *bao* 胞 (foetal membrane), *bao* 抱 (to embrace), *pao* 袍 (gown), and *bao* 雹 (hail). With *bao* 包 as their phonetic element, these characters all relate to the concept of ‘wrapping’. Similarly, characters such as *huan* 煥 (sparkling), *huan* 渙 (to suffuse), *huan* 癱 (paralysis, a serious illness), and *huan* 喚 (to call out loud), sharing *huan* 奐 as their phonetic element, are all associated with the notion of ‘great’.⁶⁴⁹ The phonetic element of these characters encapsulates their etymon, thereby establishing semantic connections among characters within the same phonetic series.

However, phonetic elements can be multi-semantic. In his article ‘The *Youwen* theory in the Development of Textual Studies and Its Elucidation’, Shen Jianshi highlighted that characters sharing the same phonetic element can exhibit diverse meanings. For example, characters containing the phonetic element ‘*fei* 非’ often pertain to the concept of ‘deviating’. However, characters such as *fei* 菲 (radish), *fei* 翡 (red-feather finch, jadeite), and *fei* 癩 (heat rash) are associated with the notion of ‘red’. Similarly, characters utilising ‘*wu* 吾’ for

⁶⁴⁸ Shen Jianshi, ‘Youwenshuo zai xunguxue shang zhi yange jiqi tuichan’, p. 783.

⁶⁴⁹ Wang Ning 王寧, *Gudai hanyu* 古代漢語 [Ancient Chinese] (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2013), p. 58.

pronunciation primarily convey the notion of ‘clarity’, as seen in 晤 meaning ‘clear’, 悟 meaning ‘to become aware of’, and 寤 meaning ‘to awaken’. However, characters such as *yu* 齧 (uneven teeth, to disagree), *yu* 語 (words, to communicate), *yu* 毖 (to prohibit), *yu* 圜 (prison), and *wu* 牾 (defiant) encompass meanings related to ‘converse’ and ‘prohibition’. These examples illustrate that the phoneme in the pronunciation of a character can encompass multiple senses. Thus, it is inappropriate to hastily generalise that *all* the characters sharing a given phonetic element share a given meaning.⁶⁵⁰

Therefore, Duan’s assertion that ‘*all* phonetic compounds sharing a given phonetic element share a given meaning’ lacks robust linguistic support. Instead, the principle should be contingent upon meticulous analysis of individual cases. It is important to recognise exceptions, as the meaning contained in a phonetic element sometimes branches out into diverse ways. The following are some of the examples.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 詖，辨論也。从言，皮聲。

Pi 詖 means ‘to argue’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *pi* 皮 (skin, fur) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 皮，剝取獸革也。被，析也。凡从皮之字皆有分析之意。故詖為辨論也。⁶⁵¹

Pi 皮 is to splice off the animal hide. *Bi* 被 means ‘to break or to separate’. All the characters that use ‘*pi* 皮’ to indicate pronunciation have the sense of ‘splitting or analysing’. As such, *pi* 詖 implies ‘arguing’ (as arguing requires analysis).

Note: Shen Jianshi put forward that characters deriving from 皮 developed into different layers of meanings: (1) the sense of ‘splitting or dividing’, such as *pi* 詖 (to argue, to debate), *bo* 簸 (winnow), and *po* 破 (being broken); (2) the sense of ‘adding’, such as *bi* 彼 (another), *bei* 鞞 (saddle and bridle), *pi* 皮 (skin), *pei* 帔 (cape), and *bei* 被 (to cover); (3) the sense of

⁶⁵⁰ Shen Jianshi, ‘Youwenshuo zai xunguxue shang zhi yange jiqi tuichan’, p. 809.

⁶⁵¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 91.

‘slope’, such as *po* 頗 (inclined), *bo* 尪 (crippled), *bo* 跛 (lame), *bo* 波 (wave), *po* 陂 (slant), and *po* 坡 (slope). In the development of the above extended meanings, it could be suggested that the senses of ‘splitting or dividing’ and ‘adding’ originated from ‘skin’, the original meaning of 皮; subsequently, the sense of ‘slope’ may have emerged from the concept of ‘splitting or dividing’.⁶⁵²

Example 2:

Shuowen: 囿，回也。从口，云聲。

Yun 囿 is explained as ‘turning back’. It is comprised of *wei* 口 (encirclement) with *yun* 云 (cloud) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 雲字下曰：「象雲回轉形。」 沝字下曰：「轉流也。」 凡从云之字，皆有回轉之義。⁶⁵³

The annotation for the character *yun* 雲 is ‘resembling a cirriform cloud.’ The explanation for the character *yun* 沝 is ‘billows or winding current’. Thus, all the characters using ‘*yun* 云’ to indicate pronunciation tend to be associated with the concept of ‘turning over’.

Note: In his *Tongyuan zidian*, Wang Li classifies 囿 and 沝 as cognate words with the meaning of ‘turning or revolving’.⁶⁵⁴ However, characters such as *yun* 紜 (numerous), *hun* 怙 (discomposed), and *yun* 𤝵 (numerous, disorder) are glossed as ‘being numerous and in disorder’.⁶⁵⁵ This illustrates that phonetic elements can have multiple semantic associations.

Example 3: Characters containing the phonetic element *jia* 段, such as *xia* 霞 (rosy dawn), *xia* 瑕 (jade with some red), and *xia* 駮 (horse of mixed red and white colour), are associated with ‘red’,⁶⁵⁶ whereas characters such as *jia* 遐 (remote), *jia* 𡗗 (long, large), and *xia* 遐 (far extent) convey the sense of ‘long, remote, or great’.⁶⁵⁷

The examples provided above underscore that the connection between a word’s

⁶⁵² Shen Jianshi, ‘Youwenshuo zai xunguxue shang zhi yange jiqi tuichan’, p. 809.

⁶⁵³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 279.

⁶⁵⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 419.

⁶⁵⁵ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 128.

⁶⁵⁶ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 526.

⁶⁵⁷ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuan zici congkao*, p. 386.

pronunciation and meaning is not absolute. The meaning conveyed by a phonetic element may not be specific or definitive. Rather, characters sharing the same phonetic element could encompass various sets of meanings. Therefore, it is important to maintain a very cautious attitude and avoid applying a single explanation to the meaning of a group of characters solely based on their shared phonetic element.⁶⁵⁸

4.6 Many Phonetic Compounds Are Concurrently Associative Compounds

Characters that share a given phonetic element often share a given meaning, indicating that the phonetic element serves a semantic function. Phonetic elements with a concurrent semantic function are extremely useful in the study of lexical meaning, especially in the study of etymology.⁶⁵⁹ The source-indicating feature of phonetic elements can help us clearly comprehend a character's meaning. The semantic function of the phonetic element highlights the uniqueness and subtlety of phonetic compounds.

Duan propounded the principle that 'the phonetic compound spans both the principles of shaping sound and combining intentions' in his annotation for the character *er* 蔞 in the *Shuowen*.

Shuowen: 蔞，華盛。从艸，爾聲。

Er 蔞 denotes 'luxuriant growth of a flower'. It is comprised of *cao* 艸 (grass) with *er* 爾 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此以形聲見會意，蔞為華盛，灑為水盛。⁶⁶⁰

The phonetic compound 蔞 spans both the principles of shaping sound and combining intentions. *Er* 蔞 denotes 'luxuriant growth of flower', while *mi* 灑 means 'plenty of water'.

The sense of 'flourishing' contained in the phonetic element 爾 contributes to the overall

⁶⁵⁸ Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, *Wenzixue gaiyao* 文字學概要 [Chinese Writing], trans. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman (New Haven: Birdtrack Press, 2000), p. 257.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 259.

⁶⁶⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 38.

meaning of the characters 藹 and 瀾. In the *Duanzhu*, Duan highlighted many examples where characters were constructed using both *huiyi* and *xingsheng* principles. For some phonetic compounds, Xu did not clarify the semantic function of their phonetic elements, while Duan made additional notes. Below, I present related examples from the *Shuowen* according to the place of articulation of the phonetic element. I also consult etymological dictionaries by Wang Li, Schuessler, and Yin Jiming to verify and supplement Duan's words where relevant.

4.6.1 Phonetic Element Which Is Labial

The examples below illustrate the phonetic elements containing initial consonants which are labial.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 埤，增也。从土，卑聲。

Pi 埤 is defined as 'to add'. It is comprised of *tu* 土 (soil) with *bei* 卑 (low) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《詩·北門》曰：「政事一埤益我。」《傳》曰：「埤，厚也。」此與會部「皦」、衣部「裨」，音義皆同。……凡从卑之字，皆取自卑加高之意，所謂天道虧盈益謙，君子撝（取）多益寡也。凡形聲中有會意者，例此。⁶⁶¹

Under the sentence '*zhengshi yi biyi wo* 政事一埤益我' (From the increasing government work, I'm overloaded) from the *Book of Poetry*, *Mao's Commentary* notes that '*pi* 埤 means to increase.' The sound and meaning of *pi* 埤 are the same as *bi* 皦 (to add) with the classifier '*hui* 會' (to conjoin) and *bi* 裨 (to aid) with the classifier '*yi* 衣' (clothes).....All the characters using '*bei* 卑' (low) to indicate pronunciation have the sense of 'heightening from the low'. It is what the *Book of Changes* means by saying that 'the way of heaven is to decrease the plenty and increase the modest. Superior men (*junzi* 君子, meaning a person of noble character with good judgment) take from the plenty and increase the needed.' The characters above with 卑 as the phonetic element exemplify phonetic compounds that also adhere to the principle of combining intentions in their formation.

Shuowen: 皦，益也。从會，卑聲。

Pi 皦 denotes 'to benefit or to increase'. It is comprised of *hui* 會 (to assemble) with *bei* 卑 (low) as the phonetic.

⁶⁶¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 696.

Duanzhu: 𡗗、裨古今字。今字作「裨益」，古字作「𡗗益」。「裨」行而「𡗗」廢矣。⁶⁶²

Pi 𡗗 and *bi* 裨 are ancient and modern graphs. The current use of *biyi* 裨益 (to benefit) was written as *piyi* 𡗗益 in ancient times. The character 𡗗 is no longer in use and has been replaced by 裨.

Note: According to the *Duanzhu*, characters using *bei* 卑/*pjig/ to indicate pronunciation have the sense of ‘benefitting or increasing’, such as *pi* 埤 (to add, low ground), *pi* 𡗗 (to benefit, to increase), and *bi* 裨 (to benefit). On the other hand, in Schuessler’s *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, *bi* 埤 (low ground, to add), *bi* 庠 (short), and *bi* 婢 (female slave, servant) are classified as cognate words sharing the meaning of ‘being low or humble’.⁶⁶³ Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian* also lists 婢, 庠, and 埤 as sharing the meaning of ‘being low or humble’.⁶⁶⁴ It can be inferred that the sense of ‘increasing’ mentioned by Duan might be an extension of the concept of ‘being low or humble’. However, the word ‘all’ (*jie* 皆) that used by Duan is somewhat arbitrary, as characters such as *bi* 庠 (short) and *bi* 婢 (female slave, servant) with the phonetic element 卑 are related to the sense of ‘being low or humble’ rather than ‘increasing’.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 包，妊也。人褻妊，巳在中，象子未成形也。

Bao 包 mimics the shape of a pregnant woman. The component *si* 巳 in the middle mimics an undeveloped embryo.

Duanzhu: 勺象裹其中，巳字象未成之子也。勺亦聲。⁶⁶⁵

The graphical form of the character *bao* 勺 depicts ‘embracing something inside’, while the form of 巳 depicts ‘undeveloped embryo’. 勺 (to wrap) also indicates the pronunciation.

Note: The *fanqie* spelling of 包 /*prəgw/ and 勺/*prəgw/ are both *bujiao* 布交 and the two characters are homonyms in Old Chinese. Duan’s annotation suggests that the component

⁶⁶² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 226.

⁶⁶³ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 158.

⁶⁶⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 115.

⁶⁶⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 438.

勺 (to wrap) not only contributes to the meaning of 包 but also serves as the phonetic element. In Wang Li's *Tongyuan zidian*, the characters 勺, 包, and *bao* 胞 (foetal membrane) are classified as cognate words. Wang Li references Wang Yun's words, noting that the character 勺 in the *Shuowen* is equivalent to today's 包, while the character 包 in the *Shuowen* corresponds to today's 胞.⁶⁶⁶

Example 3:

Shuowen: 逢, 遇也。从辵, 夆聲。

Feng 逢 denotes 'to meet'. The character is comprised of *chuo* 辵 (to walk) with *feng* 夆 (to defiant) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 夆, 晤也。晤, 逆也。此形聲包會意。⁶⁶⁷

夆 is defined as 'wu 晤' (to defiant). 晤 is defined as 'ni 逆' (to go against). Thus, the principles of constructing the character 逢 encompass both shaping sound and combining intentions.

Note: Duan's annotation suggests that 夆 /*bjung/ contributes to the meaning of 逢.

Wang Li references the observations of Qing scholars Xu Hao and Wang Yun, noting that 夆 and 逢 are ancient and modern graphs. 逢 is derived from 夆, which has the same meaning.⁶⁶⁸

In Yin Jiming's *Hanyu tongyuan zici congkao* 漢語同源字詞叢考 (A Study of Chinese Cognate Words), 逢 and *feng* 縫 (to sew) are classified as cognate words, sharing the meaning of 'meeting'.⁶⁶⁹

Example 4:

Shuowen: 緜, 散絲也。从糸, 辰聲。

Pai 緜 means 'separated silk'. The character is comprised of *mi* 糸 (silk) with *pai* 辰 (obliquely flowing water) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 水之衰流別曰辰, 別水曰派, 血理之分曰𩚑, 散絲曰緜。⁶⁷⁰

'Obliquely flowing water' is called 辰. *Pai* 派 denotes 'branched water'. *Mai* 𩚑 denotes 'branched blood vessels'. 緜 means 'separated silk'.

⁶⁶⁶ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 249.

⁶⁶⁷ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 72.

⁶⁶⁸ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 409.

⁶⁶⁹ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuan zici congkao*, p. 255.

⁶⁷⁰ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 654.

Note: Duan's annotation suggests that characters with *pai* 辰 /*phrigh/ as the phonetic element are often associated with the notion of 'oblique or branched', exemplified by 派 (branched water), 脈 (branched blood vessels), and 緋 (separated silk). Wang Li references the observations of Wang Yun and Zhu Junsheng, noting that 派 is derived from 辰 which shares the same meaning. 派 is considered a variant form of 辰. 脈 (脈) and 辰 (派) are cognate words.⁶⁷¹ Yin Jingming also classifies 脈, 脈, and 派 as cognate words, sharing the sense of 'branched'.⁶⁷²

Example 5:

Shuowen: 𧐇, 牛黃白色。从牛, 麤聲。

Piao 𧐇 denotes 'yellowish-white cattle'. It is comprised of *niu* 牛 (cattle) with *biao* 麤 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 黃馬發白色曰驃, 票、麤同聲, 然則𧐇者, 黃牛發白色也。《內則》: 「鳥皤色」亦謂發白色。⁶⁷³

The yellow horse with white spots is called 驃. *Piao* 票 and *biao* 麤 are homonyms in Old Chinese. *Piao* 𧐇 signifies 'yellowish-white cattle'. 'Neize' notes that '*niao piaose* 鳥皤色 means the bird's feathers are white'.

Note: Some characters using '麤' to indicate pronunciation are linked with the concept of 'white', as evidenced by 𧐇 (yellowish-white cattle) and 皤 (white). This suggests that 麤 also conveys meaning aside from denoting sound. Furthermore, Duan observed that since *piao* 票 /*phjiagw/ and *biao* 麤 /*bragw/ are pronounced the same in Old Chinese,⁶⁷⁴ 驃 (yellow horse with white spots) is also associated with 'white' though its phonetic element is 票 instead of 麤. This demonstrates Duan's approach, which considers not only the graphic form but also the sound when interpreting a character's meaning.

⁶⁷¹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 115.

⁶⁷² Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuan zici congkao*, p. 198.

⁶⁷³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 52.

⁶⁷⁴ 票 /*phjiagw/ and 麤 /*bragw/ have similar initial consonants, which are bilabial sounds, and belong to the same rhyme group of *xiao* 宵 /*agw/. They are near homonyms in Old Chinese.

4.6.2 Phonetic Element Which Is Lingual

The examples below illustrate the phonetic elements containing initial consonants which are lingual.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 袵，禪衣也。一曰盛服，从衣，彡聲。

Zhen 袵 is defined as ‘unlined gown’. Another definition of 袵 is ‘embroidered robe’. The character is comprised of *yi* 衣 (clothes) with *zhen* 彡 (thick hair) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 彡本訓稠髮。凡彡聲字多為濃重。……《孟子》：「被袵衣。」袵衣亦當為盛服。⁶⁷⁵

The original meaning of 彡 is ‘thick hair’. Characters that use ‘*zhen* 彡’ to indicate pronunciation are often glossed as ‘thick or dense’... 袵 denotes ‘embroidered garments’ in the sentence ‘*pi zhenyi* 被袵衣’ (He wore fine robe) from *Mencius*.

Note: 彡 is the variant form of *zhen* 鬣 meaning thick hair. Duan annotated under the character *zhen* 稭 (dense grass) that ‘稭 is extended to denote “thick” and is semantically related to 鬣’.⁶⁷⁶ According to the *Duanzhu*, characters using *zhen* 彡 to indicate pronunciation often relate to the concept of ‘thick or dense’, exemplified by *zhen* 彡 (thick hair) and 袵 (embroidered robe). Moreover, the meaning contained in the phonetic element 真 is semantically related to that of 彡. Both Wang Li and Yin Jiming classify *zhen* 稭 (dense grass), *zhen* 縝 (closely woven), *zhen* 楨 (dense wood), and *zhen* 彡 (鬣) (thick hair) as cognate words.⁶⁷⁷ Since 真 /*tjin/ and 彡 /*tjinx/ are homonyms, it can be inferred that the sense of thick originated from the pronunciation /*tjin/.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 茁，艸初生地兒。从艸出。

Zhuo 茁 denotes ‘sprouts appearing above the ground’. The character is comprised of *cao* 艸 (grass) and *chu* 出 (to go out).

⁶⁷⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 393.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 324.

⁶⁷⁷ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 564. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 2, p. 1173.

Duanzhu: 言會意以包形聲也。⁶⁷⁸

This means that the principles of character construction encompass both combining intentions and shaping sound.

Note: 茁 /*trjət/ and 出 /*thjət/ share similar initial consonants, which are tongue-head sounds, and belong to the same rhyme group of *wei* 微 /*-ət/. They are near homonyms. The component 出 serves as the phonetic element of 茁. Thus, both the sound and meaning of 茁 derive from 出. In both Wang Li's and Yin Jiming's dictionaries, 茁 and 出 are considered cognate words, signifying the meaning of 'out'.⁶⁷⁹

Example 3:

The character *chuan* 川 is defined as 'stream or river' in the *Shuowen*.⁶⁸⁰ 川 is associated with 'smoothly going through'.

Shuowen: 訓，說教也。从言，川聲。

Xun 訓 denotes 'to instruct'. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *chuan* 川 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 說教者，說釋而教之，必順其理。引伸之凡順皆曰訓。⁶⁸¹

Instruction requires explanation and teaching during which process, certain principles should be followed (*shun* 順). 訓 has an extended sense of 'following or according with'.

Shuowen: 馴，馬順也。从馬，川聲。

Xun 馴 denotes 'tamed (*shun* 順) horse'. It is comprised of *ma* 馬 (horse) with *chuan* 川 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 古馴、訓、順三字互相段借，皆川聲也。⁶⁸²

The characters 馴, 訓, and 順 with *chuan* 川 as their phonetic element can be borrowed for each other in ancient texts.

Shuowen: 順，理也。从頁，从川。

Shun 順 denotes 'to follow the principles'. It is comprised of *ye* 頁 (head, page) and *chuan* 川.

Duanzhu: 小徐作「川聲」，則舉形聲包會意。訓、馴字皆曰川聲也。⁶⁸³

⁶⁷⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 38.

⁶⁷⁹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 484. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 412.

⁶⁸⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 574.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid, p. 91.

⁶⁸² Ibid, p. 471.

Xu Kai's *Shuowen xizhuan* considers *chuan* 川 as a phonetic element. It indicates that the principles of constructing the character 順 encompass both shaping sound and combining intentions. Both 訓 and 馴 have 川 as their phonetic element.

Note: According to the *Duanzhu*, the phonetic element *chuan* 川 /*thjɛn/ in 馴, 訓, and 順 not only denotes sound but also conveys meaning.⁶⁸⁴ Both Wang Li and Yin Jiming classify 馴, 訓, and 順 as cognate words associated with the sense of 'obedient'.⁶⁸⁵

Example 4:

Shuowen: 娣，同夫之女弟也。从女，弟聲。

Di 娣 means 'a younger wife of the same husband'. It is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) with *di* 弟 (younger brother) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 所謂名之可以段借通僞者也，如兄弟之僞同姓異姓皆得僞之也。妯娌僞長者曰姒，少者曰娣，與坐以夫齒之禮，竝行不悖。形聲包會意。⁶⁸⁶

The appellation can serve as a general term. For instance, 'brother' (*xiongdi* 兄弟) can be used among cousins, regardless of whether they share the same family name or not. Similarly, for sister-in-law, the elder one is called *si* 姒, while the younger one is called *di* 娣. This practice aligns with the etiquette of seating according to age. The character 娣 is formed by the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions.

Note: 娣 denotes 'the younger ones of the womenfolk of a family'. Here, the phonetic element 弟 also contributes to the meaning of 娣. According to Wang Li's *Tongyuan zidian*, 弟, 娣, and *ti* 悌 (respectful toward elder brothers, fraternal) are classified as cognate words.⁶⁸⁷ Schuessler's dictionary also classifies 弟, 悌, and *di* 第 (order, sequel) as cognate words.⁶⁸⁸ Hence, the characters 弟, 悌, 娣, and 第 with the phonetic element *di* 弟 /*didh/ are all related to the notion of 'order'.

⁶⁸³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 471.

⁶⁸⁴ In terms of Baxter and Sagart's reconstruction system, the suffix /*-s/ has a function of deriving verbs from nouns. In this example, the verb 訓 /*t̚lu[n]-s/ (to instruct) and the verb 順 /*Cə.lu[n]-s/ (to follow, to obey) derive from the noun 川 /*t̚lu[n]/ (stream, river) by means of suffix /*-s/. Moreover, the departing tone of *xùn* 訓 and *shùn* 順 in Middle Chinese derived from the suffix /*-s/. In addition, the prefix /*s-/ imparts a causative meaning to 馴 /*sə.lu[n]/ (to tame). See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart's *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 56, p. 321.

⁶⁸⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 547. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 76.

⁶⁸⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 621.

⁶⁸⁷ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 442.

⁶⁸⁸ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 210.

Example 5:

Shuowen: 畝，平田也。从支田。

Tian 畝 means ‘to cultivate a field’, combining the intentions of *pu* 支 (to tap, to beat) and *tian* 田 (field).

Duanzhu: 田亦聲。⁶⁸⁹

田 also indicates the pronunciation.

Note: The *fanqie* spelling of 畝 /*din/ and 田 /*din/ are both *dainian* 待年 and the two characters are homonyms in Old Chinese. The component 田 contributes both sound and meaning to 畝. In both Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian* and Yin Jiming’s *Tongyuanci dadian*, 田 and 畝 are considered cognate words that are related to the meaning of ‘field’.⁶⁹⁰

Example 6:

Shuowen: 娠，女妊身動也。从女，辰聲。

Shen 娠 denotes ‘foetal movement in a pregnant woman’s belly’. It is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) with *chen* 辰 (early morning) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡从辰之字皆有動意。震、振是也。妊而身動曰娠。⁶⁹¹

All the characters using ‘*chen* 辰’ to denote pronunciation bear the sense of ‘movement’, such as *zhen* 震 (thunder), *zhen* 振 (to shake), as well as *shen* 娠 meaning ‘foetal movement’.

Note: According to the *Duanzhu*, characters using *chen* 辰 /*djən/ to indicate pronunciation convey the sense of ‘movement’, as seen in *zhen* 震 (thunder), *zhen* 振 (to shake), and *shen* 娠 (foetal movement). Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 震, 振, and 娠 as cognate words associated with the concept of ‘moving’.⁶⁹² However, the word ‘all’ used by Duan is arbitrary, considering exceptions such as *shen* 蜃 (clam) and *zhen* 賑 (to endow, to succour), where the phonetic element 辰 does not convey the sense of ‘moving or shaking’.

Example 7:

⁶⁸⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 127.

⁶⁹⁰ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 563. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 315.

⁶⁹¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 620.

⁶⁹² Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 545. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 611.

Shuowen: 濃，露多也。从水，農聲。

Nong 濃 signifies ‘thick dew’. It is comprised of *shui* 水 (water) with *nong* 農 (farming) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 釀，厚酒也。衣部曰：「襪，衣厚兒。」凡農聲字皆訓厚。⁶⁹³

Nong 釀 means ‘heavy-flavoured wine’. *Nong* 襪, with the classifier *yi* 衣 (clothes), means ‘thick clothes’. Characters with the phonetic element 農 are all glossed as ‘thick’.

Note: The phonetic element *nong* 農 /*nəŋw/ in the aforementioned phonetic compounds serves not only to indicate sound but also to convey meaning. In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, 濃, *nong* 膿 (pus), 釀, 襪, and *nong* 穰 (thick growth) are classified as cognate words.⁶⁹⁴ Schuessler’s dictionary also classifies 濃, 膿, and 釀 as cognate words related to the notion of ‘thick’.⁶⁹⁵ Thus, characters containing the phonetic element *nong* 農 /*nəŋw/ are often associated with the concept of ‘thick or dense’. However, the word ‘all’ (*jie* 皆) employed by Duan is arbitrary, given exceptions like the character *nong* 儂 (I, you), which serves as a pronoun and bears no relation to ‘strong or thick’.

4.6.3 Phonetic Element Which Is Velar

The examples below illustrate the phonetic elements containing initial consonants which are velar.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 構，蓋也。从木，莠聲。

Gou 構 denotes ‘to cover, as with the beams of a house’. The character is comprised of *mu* 木 (wood) with *gou* 莠 (crossing beam) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此與莠音同義近。莠，交積材也，凡覆蓋必交積材，以形聲包會意。⁶⁹⁶

It has the same pronunciation and a similar meaning to 莠 which denotes ‘crossing beam’. The construction of a house typically involves the use of crossing beams. 構 is formed through a combination of principles involving both shaping sound and combining intentions.

⁶⁹³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 564.

⁶⁹⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 646.

⁶⁹⁵ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 404.

⁶⁹⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 256.

Note: Xu Hao noted that 莠 and 構 are ancient and modern graphs.⁶⁹⁷

Shuowen: 遘, 遇也。从辵, 莠聲。

Gou 遘 means ‘to come across’. It is comprised of *chuo* 辵 (to walk) with *gou* 莠 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 遘、遇疊韻。⁶⁹⁸

遘 (/ *kugh/) and *yu* 遇 (/ *ngjugh/) are rhymed syllables

Note: When two people meet (遘) each other, they may cross paths.

Shuowen: 媾, 重婚也。从女, 莠聲。

Gou 媾 means ‘marriage between relatives’.⁶⁹⁹ It is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) with *gou* 莠 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 重婚者, 重疊交互為婚姻也。按, 字从莠者, 謂若交積材也……形聲中有會意。⁷⁰⁰

‘Marriage between relatives’ indicates a double relationship in the marriage. Characters with the component 莠 are semantically related to 莠, which denotes ‘crossing beam’... 媾 is formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions.

Note: *Gou* 媾 denotes ‘conjugal union’ and is extended to denote ‘to make peace with a foreign country’.⁷⁰¹

The phonetic element 莠 in the above phonetic compounds not only denotes sound but also conveys meaning. Jin Lixin states that the words pronounced as *gou* in Old Chinese mostly have the meaning of ‘meeting or contacting’, such as *gou* 遘 (to meet), *gou* 覯 (to meet), *gou* 媾 (to marry, to make peace), *gou* 莠 (crossing beam), and *gou* 構 (to build).⁷⁰²

Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 莠 and *gou* 篝 (bamboo cage) as cognates with the meaning of ‘interlaced’, while 遘, 覯, and 媾 as cognates with the meaning of ‘meeting’.⁷⁰³

Thus, characters containing the phonetic element *gou* 莠 / *kugh/ are often related to the

⁶⁹⁷ Xu Hao, *Shuowen jiezi zhujian*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 225, p. 593.

⁶⁹⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 72.

⁶⁹⁹ Marriage between relatives refers to double marriages. For instance, the son marries to a distant cousin.

⁷⁰⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 622.

⁷⁰¹ Editorial Committee, *Hanyu dazidian*, p. 1145.

⁷⁰² Jin Lixin, *Shanggu hanyu yinxi*, p. 9.

⁷⁰³ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, pp. 184–8. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 258.

notion of ‘crossing or meeting’.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 京，人所爲絕高丘也。从高省，丨象高形。

Jing 京 signifies ‘man-made hill or mound’. It is comprised of an abbreviated form of *gao* 高 (high, tall) and 丨 mimicking a tall image.

Duanzhu: 《釋詁》云：「京，大也。」其引伸之義也。凡高者必大。⁷⁰⁴

In the Chapter ‘*Shigu* 釋詁’ (Explaining Ancient Usage) in *Erya*, it states: ‘京 means great or large, which is its extended meaning.’ Anything that is high must be big.

Shuowen: 景，日光也。从日，京聲。

Jing 景 denotes ‘sunlight’. It is comprised of *ri* 日 (sun) with *jing* 京 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《爾雅》、《毛詩》皆曰：「景，大也」，其引伸之義也。⁷⁰⁵

Both *Erya* and *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* note that ‘*jing* 景 denotes “great”, which is its extended meaning’.

Shuowen: 鯨，海大魚也。从魚，京聲。⁷⁰⁶

Jing 鯨 is the word for ‘whale’, a huge fish in the sea. It is comprised of *yu* 魚 (fish) with *jing* 京 as the phonetic.

Note: The phonetic element 京 in the above phonetic compounds serves not only to indicate sound but also to convey meaning. In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, 京, 鯨, and *jing* 麋 (big deer) are classified as cognate words.⁷⁰⁷ In Schuessler’s dictionary, 京, 景, and 鯨 are considered cognate words too.⁷⁰⁸ Therefore, characters containing the phonetic element *jing* 京 /*kljiang/ are often associated with the concept of ‘great’.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 鍊，冶金也。从金，東聲。

Lian 鍊 means ‘to refine metal’. It is comprised of *jin* 金 (metal) with *jian* 東 (to select) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 煉，治絲也。練，治繒也。鍊，冶金也。皆謂澗澗欲其精，非第冶之而已。冶者，銷也。引申之，凡治之使精曰鍊。此亦形聲包會意。⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 231.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 307.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 585.

⁷⁰⁷ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 362.

⁷⁰⁸ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 316.

⁷⁰⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 710.

Lian 煉 means ‘to boil raw silk’. *Lian* 練 means ‘to boil silk to purify it’. *Lian* 鍊 means ‘to refine metal’. All three characters denote ‘refining by melting’ rather than ‘only smelting’ (*ye* 冶). 冶 means ‘to smelt’. 鍊 further signifies ‘to refine or to purify’. These characters (with 東 as the phonetic element) are formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions.

Note: According to the *Duanzhu*, the characters 煉, 練, and 鍊, which use *jian* 東 /*krianx/ to indicate pronunciation, have the sense of ‘refining’. Wang Li and Schuessler also acknowledge that 煉, 練, and 鍊 are related to the sense of ‘refining’.⁷¹⁰

Example 4:

Shuowen: 陁, 山絕坎也。从阜, 陁聲。

Xing 陁 denotes ‘mountain gorge’. It is comprised of *fu* 阜 (mound) with *jing* 陁 (streams running underground) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡陁聲之字皆訓之直而長者。⁷¹¹

All the characters that use ‘*jing* 陁’ to indicate pronunciation bear the sense of ‘straight and long’.

Note: In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, *jing* 頸 (neck), *jing* 莖 (the stem of plants), and *xing* 陁 (ravine) are considered cognate words.⁷¹² In Schuessler’s dictionary, *jing* 經 (warp, to pass through), *jing* 徑 (small path, diameter), *xing* 陁 (ravine), and *jing* 逕 (gone far away) are considered cognate words.⁷¹³ Therefore, characters using *jing* 陁 /*king/ to indicate pronunciation often bear the sense of ‘straight and long’. However, the word ‘all’ that Duan used is arbitrary since not all the characters with the phonetic element 陁 are glossed as ‘straight and long’. Characters such as *keng* 硜 (hard stone) and *jin* 勁 (strong) are related to ‘hard or strong’.⁷¹⁴

Example 5:

Shuowen: 仰, 舉也。从人卬。

Yang 仰 is explained as ‘facing upward’, combining the intentions of *ren* 人 (people)

⁷¹⁰ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 603. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 355.

⁷¹¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 741.

⁷¹² Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 335.

⁷¹³ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 317.

⁷¹⁴ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 2, p. 655.

and *yang* 印 (being high).

Duanzhu: 與印音同義近。古印仰多互用。此舉會意包形聲。⁷¹⁵

仰 and 印 have the same sound and a similar meaning. 印 and 仰 are often used interchangeably in ancient texts. The character 仰 is formed through the principles of both combining intentions and shaping sound.

Note: The characters 仰 /*ngjangx/ and 印 /*ngjangx/ are homonyms. The 印 component of 仰 not only conveys meaning but also indicates pronunciation. Both Wang Li and Schuessler note that 仰 (to look up), 印 (being high), and *ang* 昂 (to lift high) are cognate words that are related to the sense of ‘being high or lifting high’.⁷¹⁶

Example 6:

Shuowen: 齧，齧也。从齒，奇聲。

Yi 齧 is explained as ‘to bite’. It is comprised of *chi* 齒 (teeth) with *qi* 奇 (odd) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡从奇之字多訓偏，如持訓偏引，齧訓側齧。⁷¹⁷

Characters using ‘*qi* 奇’ to indicate pronunciation often carry the sense of ‘leaning to one side’. For example, *ji* 倚 denotes ‘to pull aside’. *Yi* 齧 means ‘to bite on one side of the mouth’.

Note: According to the *Duanzhu*, characters using *qi* 奇 /*kjar/ to indicate pronunciation often carry the sense of ‘leaning to one side’, such as *ji* 倚 (to pull aside) and *yi* 齧 (to bite on one side of the mouth). However, Wang Li classifies 奇 (odd) and *ji* 倚 (irregular) as cognate words that are related to the sense of ‘odd’,⁷¹⁸ neglecting 倚 and 齧 which convey the sense of ‘leaning to one side’.

Example 7:

Shuowen: 芋，大葉實根駭人，故謂之芋也。从艸，于聲。

Yu 芋 (taro) is a kind of plant whose leaves and roots are very big. The character is comprised of *cao* 艸 (grass) with *yu* 于 (to, in) as the phonetic.

⁷¹⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 377.

⁷¹⁶ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 364. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 558.

⁷¹⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 80.

⁷¹⁸ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 455.

Duanzhu: 口部曰吁，驚也。《毛傳》曰：「訃，大也。」凡于聲字多訓大。芋之為物，葉大根實，二者皆堪駭人，故謂之芋。⁷¹⁹

The character *xu* 吁, with the classifier ‘*kou* 口’ (mouth), denotes ‘a tone of voice indicating surprise’. *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* states: ‘*Xu* 訃 means great.’ Therefore, characters using ‘*yu* 于’ to indicate pronunciation often have the sense of ‘big or large’. Taro is a kind of plant with big leaves and solid roots. Thus, it is called *yu* 芋.

Note: According to the *Duanzhu*, characters using *yu* 于 /*gwjag/ to indicate pronunciation often convey the sense of ‘big or large’, such as *xu* 吁 (sighing), *xu* 訃 (great), and *yu* 芋 (a kind of plant with big leaves and solid roots). Wang Li classifies 訃, 芋, *xu* 盱 (wide open eyes), *yu* 宇 (great), and *yu* 竽 (a kind of big instrument consisting of seventeen bamboo pipes) as cognate words related to the sense of ‘big or great’.⁷²⁰ In his *A Study of Chinese Cognate Words*, Yin Jiming also classifies characters such as 訃, 芋, 盱, 宇, 竽, *yu* 杆 (big tub), and *kua* 夸 (extravagant) as cognate words that share the meaning of ‘big’.⁷²¹

4.6.4 Phonetic Element Which Is Dental

The examples below illustrate the phonetic elements containing initial consonants which are dental.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 叢，艸叢生兒。从艸，叢聲。

Cong 叢 denotes ‘the lush growth of grass’. The character is comprised of *cao* 艸 (grass) with *cong* 叢 (clump) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 叢，聚也。叢，艸衆生也。此形聲包會意。⁷²²

叢 means ‘clump’. *Cong* 叢 denotes ‘thicket’. The character 叢 is formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions.

Note: 叢 indicates both the sound and meaning of 叢. The sense of lush or clump contained in 叢 originates from its phonetic element 叢. In the *Shuowen*, 叢 is explained as

⁷¹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 25.

⁷²⁰ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 142.

⁷²¹ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuan zici congkao*, p. 10.

⁷²² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 47.

‘crowded together’. It is comprised of *zhuo* 萃 (thick grass) with *qu* 取 as the phonetic.⁷²³ In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, *ju* 聚 (to collect, to store), *ju* 冢 (to accumulate), 叢 (thicket), and 叢 (the lush growth of grass) are considered cognate words.⁷²⁴ Schuessler’s dictionary also includes 聚, *zui* 最 (to collect, to accumulate), and 叢 as cognate words.⁷²⁵ Thus, characters using *qu* 取/*tshjugx/ to indicate pronunciation often relate to the concept of ‘accumulating or collecting’.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 菜，艸之可食者。从艸，采聲。

Cai 菜 denotes ‘the edible plants’. It is comprised of *cao* 艸 (grass) with *cai* 采 (to pluck) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此舉形聲包會意。古多以采爲菜。⁷²⁶

The character 菜 is formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions. 采 was often used for 菜 (vegetable) in ancient times.

Note: The character 采 denotes ‘to pluck’. Vegetables (菜) are plants that should be plucked before being cooked and eaten. Therefore, the phonetic element *cai* 采 /*tshəgx/ concurrently serves a semantic function in addition to denoting sound. Schuessler classifies 采 and 菜 as cognate words.⁷²⁷ In Yin Jiming’s dictionary, 采 and 菜 are also classified as cognate words that share the meaning of ‘picking’.⁷²⁸

Example 3:

Shuowen: 縹，合也。从糸集。

Ji 縹 denotes ‘to gather’, combining the intentions of *mi* 糸 (silk) and *ji* 集 (to assemble).

Duanzhu: 衆絲之合曰縹，如衣部五采相合曰縹也。會意亦形聲也。⁷²⁹

Blended silk is called 縹. It is similar to the character *za* 襪, with the classifier *yi* 衣

⁷²³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 103.

⁷²⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 200.

⁷²⁵ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 325.

⁷²⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 41.

⁷²⁷ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 175.

⁷²⁸ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 2, p. 879.

⁷²⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 654.

(clothes), which means ‘blended colours’. The character 縹 is formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions.

Note: 縹 /*tsjəp/ and 集 /*dzjəp/ have similar initial consonants, which are dental sibilants, and belong to the same rhyme group of *qi* 緝 /*-əp/. They are near homonyms. Thus, the component 集 not only conveys meaning but also serves as the phonetic element of 縹. Wang Li classifies 集 and 縹 as cognate words related to the sense of ‘gathering’.⁷³⁰ In Yin Jiming’s dictionary, 集 and 縹 are also classified as cognate words that share the meaning of ‘blended’.⁷³¹ Characters such as 縹 and 襪 that use *ji* 集 /*dzjəp/ as their phonetic element are linked to the sense of ‘blended’.

4.6.5 Phonetic Element Which Is Laryngeal

The examples below illustrate the phonetic elements containing initial consonants which are laryngeal.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 貨，財也。从貝，化聲。

Huo 貨 means ‘goods’. It is comprised of *bei* 貝 (cowry shell, money) with *hua* 化 (to change) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 變化反易之物，故字从化。形聲包會意。⁷³²

Goods are used to exchange. That is why the character 貨 contains the intention of 化 (to change). 貨 is formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions.

Note: The goods are exchangeable, and thus the character 貨 contains the sense of ‘changing’, which is borne in its phonetic element 化. The component 化 contributes both sound and meaning to 貨. In Schuessler’s dictionary, 化, 貨, *e* 訛 (to change), and *e* 哞 (to move) are considered cognate words.⁷³³ In Yin Jiming’s dictionary, 化, 訛, and *hua* 愧 are

⁷³⁰ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 631.

⁷³¹ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 3, p. 1524.

⁷³² Duan Yucan, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 282.

⁷³³ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 222.

classified as cognate words that share the meaning of ‘changing’.⁷³⁴ These characters with *hua* 化 /*hwrarh/ as the phonetic element are all related to the sense of ‘changing’.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 𤝵, 轉臥也。

Yuan 𤝵 denotes ‘to turn over when sleep’.

Duanzhu: 凡𤝵聲、宛聲字皆取委曲意。⁷³⁵

Characters containing the phonetic element *yuan* 𤝵 or *wan* 宛 are all related to the sense of ‘bent or crooked’.

Note: In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, the characters *wan* 宛 (bent, crooked), *wan* 蜿 (crooked), *wan* 婉 (gentle, docile), *wan* 𤝵 (to turn over when sleep), and *wan* 琬 (jade with soft lustre) are considered cognate words.⁷³⁶ Yin Jiming also classifies characters such as 宛, *wan* 盥 (bowl), and *wan* 蜃 (earthworm) as cognate words with the common meaning of ‘bent or crooked’.⁷³⁷ These phonetic compounds that use *yuan* 𤝵 /*·wjanx/ to indicate pronunciation are linked to the sense of ‘bent or crooked’. Duan’s conclusion is generally correct, but the word ‘all’ is arbitrary, since the character *wan* 蕝 (luxuriance of growth) is an exception in this case.

Although the examples provided above do not encompass all the phonetic compounds collected in the *Shuowen*, they serve as supporting evidence to confirm Duan’s principle that ‘the phonetic element often serves a semantic function.’ The meaning contained in Chinese characters is conveyed not only by the semantic classifier but also by the phonetic element, which, in many cases, contains the etymon of the entire character. Moreover, the meaning contained in the phonetic element also indicates cultural connotations, such as 姓 and 禮, which are valuable for cultural studies.

⁷³⁴ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 178.

⁷³⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 318.

⁷³⁶ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 120.

⁷³⁷ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuan zici congkao*, p. 87.

4.7 Exceptions in Which Phonetic Elements Are Not Semantic

Duan's principle that 'many phonetic compounds are concurrently associative compounds' indicates that phonetic elements often contribute to the meaning of phonetic compounds. The semantic function of phonetic element can be applied to addressing many problems of word glosses. However, it is noteworthy that there are exceptions in which phonetic elements are not, or not directly, semantic. However, Duan did not elaborate on those cases in his annotations. The following are examples.

4.7.1 Onomatopoeia Words Representing Animal Sounds

For instance, the phonetic compound *e* 鵝 /*ngar/ (goose) is comprised of *niao* 鳥 (bird) with *wo* 我 (I) as the phonetic. The component 我 /*ngarx/ bears no meaning but solely serves as a phonetic element, mimicking the sound of a goose. The same applies to the phonetic compounds like *ji* 雞 (chicken), *ya* 鴨 (duck), and *jia* 鴛 (a kind of wild goose), whose phonetic elements do not convey meaning but solely mimic the tweeting of the birds. This type of phonetic compound often denotes the bird names and has *niao* 鳥 (bird) as its classifier.

There is another kind of phonetic compound that also mimics animal sounds. Most of them are used as adverbs and have *kou* 口 (mouth) as their classifier. Their phonetic elements do not convey meaning either. For instance, the phonetic compound *miao* 喵 /*mjagw/ (mewing) is comprised of *kou* 口 (mouth) with *miao* 苗 /*mjagw/ (sprouts) as the phonetic element, which imitates the sound of a cat mewing. The same applies to the phonetic compounds such as *gu* 呱 /*kwag/ (croaking) and *ying* 嚶 /*ring/ (twittering), whose phonetic elements *gua* 瓜 /*kwrag/ and *ying* 嬰 /*jing/ imitate the croaking of the frogs and the singing of the birds, respectively.

4.7.2 The Phonetic Compounds Created by Transliteration

Before Buddhism was introduced to China, there were no words for ‘buddha’ or ‘monk’ in Chinese. As the character *fu* 弗 /pjuət/ (not) has a similar pronunciation to the Sanskrit word ‘buddha’, 弗 is used to denote the sound in the phonetic compound *fo* 佛 /bjuət/ (buddha) which is created by transliteration. The same principle applies to the phonetic compound *seng* 僧 /səng/ (monk), whose phonetic element *ceng* 曾 /tsəng/ (a sign of the past) has a similar pronunciation to the Sanskrit word ‘sangha’ (monk). 曾 is used to denote the sound of 僧 (monk). Thus, there is no semantic link between 曾 and 僧. In addition, the phonetic compounds for some chemical elements, such as *li* 鋰, *jia* 鉀, *na* 鈉, and *meng* 錳, are respectively transliterated from the Latin words lithium, kalium, natrium, and manganese. The phonetic elements *li* 里, *jia* 甲, *nei* 內, and *meng* 孟 only denote pronunciation.

4.7.3 Phonetic Borrowing of Phonetic Element





The phonetic compound *lu* 祿 (good fortune) has no semantic relation with its phonetic element *lu* 𧇧 (to carve wood). It could be suggested that 𧇧 /*luk/ is borrowed for *lu* 鹿 /*luk/ (deer). In ancient times, deer can be reared as livestock and regarded as human property because they are tame and harmless. Hence deer signified a sense of good fortune (祿).⁷³⁸ The same applies to the phonetic compound *huo* 禍 (misfortune, disaster), which bears no relation to its phonetic element *gua* 𧇧 (jaw). 𧇧 /*khar/ is borrowed for *hu* 虎 /*hagx/ (tiger), which is dangerous and detrimental to people and livestock.⁷³⁹ Thus, 禍 means misfortune and disaster.

⁷³⁸ Chen Xinxiong and Zeng Rongpan, *Wenzixue*, p. 201.



⁷³⁹ Lin Yin, *Wenzixue gaishuo*, p. 141.

4.7.4 Altering One Part of a Graphic Form into the Phonetic Element

During the evolution from ancient scripts to small seal script, some associative compounds have been converted into phonetic compounds by altering one part of its graphic form into a phonetic element. In this case, the phonetic element bears no semantic relationship with the phonetic compound.

For example, the ancient script of the character *ben* 奔 (running fast) is written as , which originally combined the intentions of *zou* 走  (to run, to walk) and three *zhi* 止  (foot).⁷⁴⁰ Later in the small seal script of 奔, the ‘three feet’ indicating ‘running fast’ was altered to ‘three *che* 屮  (sprouting)’, which is similar to ‘three feet’ in graphic form. It is said in the *Shuowen* that 奔 /*pən/ is comprised of *yao* 夭 (to bend) with *hui* 卉 /*hwjədh/ (plants, consisting of three 屮) as the phonetic.⁷⁴¹ However, the phonetic element 卉 bears no semantic relation to the phonetic compound 奔 (running fast).

4.7.5 The Phonetic Element Is Later Added

Some phonetic compounds were created by adding a phonetic element to a proto-form. The phonetic element only denotes pronunciation but bears no meaning. For instance, the oracle bone inscriptions of *feng* 鳳  /*bjəm/ (phoenix) and *ji* 雞  /*kig/ (chicken) are pictographs which look much alike. Their phonetic elements *fan* 凡 /*bjam/ and *xi* 奚 /*gig/ were later added to differentiate them.

All the examples in 4.7 represent cases in which the phonetic element has no semantic link with the phonetic compound. These cases should be distinguished from the phonetic compounds whose phonetic elements convey meaning.

⁷⁴⁰ Li Pu 李圃 (1934–2012), *Guwenzi gulin* 古文字詁林 [The Collective Commentaries of Ancient Scripts], vol. 8 (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), p. 828.

⁷⁴¹ The ancient forms of 夭 and 走 are the same.

4.8 Summary

People often overlook the covert connection between sound and meaning, focusing primarily on the study of a character's form. However, pronunciation often provides clues to the meaning of a character and the semantic connection between characters. Duan's theory and related principles demonstrate a close relationship between sound and meaning by referencing the phonetic element and the sound of the character. This chapter sheds light on Duan's engagement with the *Shuowen* to illustrate how Duan proposed his principles in his annotations and the rationale behind these principles. It provides a comprehensive explanation with relevant examples of Duan's principles in the *Duanzhu*, reflecting how the sound component contributes to the meaning of a character, the derivation of characters, and the semantic links between characters.

Furthermore, this chapter highlights some exceptions to the principle that 'characters sharing a given phonetic element *all* share a given meaning' which Duan put forward in some of his annotations. In those instances, Duan overstated his case by using the word 'all' in this principle. Additionally, there are exceptions in which phonetic elements do not convey meaning, such as onomatopoeia words representing animal sounds, phonetic compounds created by transliteration, phonetic borrowing of the phonetic element, and so forth. Duan did not elaborate on these cases, which require further clarification.

Chapter Five: The Application of *Yinsheng qiuyi* in the *Duanzhu*

The correlation between sound and meaning underscores the effectiveness of employing sound as a means to elucidate the meanings of words. Duan applied his principles in his interlinear annotations to the *Shuowen*, inspiring later studies of word glosses and etymology. How did Duan implement *yinsheng qiuyi* in his annotations to the *Shuowen*? How can the semantic function of a character's phonetic element aid in explaining words? How does sound contribute to word glosses? The answers to these questions are worthy of exploration. By analysing selected examples from the *Duanzhu*, this chapter aims to explore Duan's engagement with the *Shuowen* to demonstrate his insights into the use of sound to solve exegetical problems. This chapter also points out the limitations of Duan's phonetic analysis and makes corrections where necessary.

Huang Kan 黄侃 once declared that:

詳攷吾國文字，多以聲音相訓，其不以聲音相訓者，百分之中，不及五六。故凡以聲音相訓者為真正之訓詁，反是即非真正之訓詁。試取《說文解字》觀之，其說解之字，什九以聲訓，以意訓者至希。推之……《釋名》諸書，莫不皆然。聲音為訓詁之綱宗，斷可知矣。⁷⁴²

With regard to Chinese characters, many word glosses are based on sound glosses. Only less than five or six percent of word glosses include explanations beyond sound. Hence, sound glosses are the predominant form of word glosses in Chinese philology. For example, ninety percent of the characters collected in the *Shuowen* are interpreted based on sound similarity. Purely explanatory glosses constitute only a small proportion...Sound glosses are also frequently applied in other exegetical works such as *Shiming*. This underscores the value of sound in explanatory glosses.

Huang clarified the essential position of sound glosses in exegesis. According to Huang's statements, the main reason is that sound is the embodiment of meaning. The meaning of a word is contained in its sound. Duan's analyses of the significance of sound to meaning are scattered throughout his annotations to the *Shuowen*. He clarified the phonetic relationship

⁷⁴² Chen Xinxiong and Zeng Rongpan, *Wenzixue*, p. 196.

between the glossed words and the glossing words as well as the semantic relationship between homonyms or near homonyms. By establishing the phonetic links between characters, the *Duanzhu* further provide valuable information on the potential source of a character's meaning.

5.1 Explaining a Character by Means of the Phonetic Element

The phonetic element is used to denote the pronunciation of a phonetic compound. Therefore, phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element shared similar pronunciations when characters were created. As homonyms often have similar meanings, characters with the same phonetic element are often semantically related. In the *Shuowen*, Xu Shen applied sound gloss as the main approach to interpreting characters and exploring the source of a word. Many of his word glosses show the semantic connection within a *xiesheng* series, a series of phonetic compounds which share the same phonetic element. The *Duanzhu* further points out their semantic and phonetic relationships.

5.1.1 Explaining a Phonetic Element through Reference to a Phonetic Compound

The following examples selected from the *Shuowen* manifest the semantic relationship between the phonetic element and the phonetic compound. Regarding these examples, Xu Shen used the phonetic compound as a glossing word to interpret its phonetic element. Duan further clarified the sound-meaning relations between the glossed word and the glossing word. This not only demonstrates Duan's principle that 'homonyms often have a similar meaning' but also shows the potential etymological relationship between a phonetic element and a phonetic compound.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 帝，諦也。

The character *di* 帝 denotes ‘to examine or to investigate’ (*di* 諦).

Duanzhu: 審諦如帝。⁷⁴³

To examine with care like an emperor.

Note: 帝 (emperor) is the phonetic element of 諦 (to examine). Here Duan clarified the semantic relationship between 帝 and 諦. Lu Zongda 陸宗達 proposes that 帝 might be the proto-form of *di* 禘 (certain royal sacrifices in ancient times).⁷⁴⁴ Accordingly, Yin Liyun 尹黎雲 notes that 帝 originally referred to worshipping the heavens and was later extended to refer to the heavens themselves. In the eyes of ancient people, the Heavenly Emperor’s actions were both meticulous and cautious, hence the extended meaning of 帝 carries the connotation of meticulousness and caution, from which 諦 is derived.⁷⁴⁵ An example illustrating the link between 帝 and 諦 can be found in the sentence ‘Confucius says “帝 means 諦 (to examine or to investigate)”’ from *Record of the Late Han Dynasty*, ‘Biography of Li Yun’.⁷⁴⁶ In the Warring States scripts, 帝 is used for 諦,⁷⁴⁷ which also indicates the semantic relationship between 帝 and 諦.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 豐，行禮之器也。

Li 豐 denotes ‘a kind of ritual (*li* 禮) vessel’.

Duanzhu: 豐、禮疊韻。⁷⁴⁸

豐 and 禮 are rhymed with each other.

Note: Since 豐 /*lidx/ and 禮 /*lidx/ are not only rhymed with each other, they are actually homonyms. Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. 豐 (ritual vessel) is the

⁷⁴³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 2.


⁷⁴⁴ Yin Liyun 尹黎雲, *Hanzi ziyuan xitong yanjiu* 漢字字源系統研究 [Research on the System of the Source of Chinese Characters] (Beijing: Renmin University of China Press, 1998), p. 327.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ *Hou han shu*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 253, p. 210.

⁷⁴⁷ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 748.

⁷⁴⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 210.

phonetic element of 禮 (ritual). The oracle bone inscription of 豊 is written as , depicting a vessel used in sacrificing. 豊 is the proto-form of 禮.⁷⁴⁹ In the Warring States scripts, 豊 is used for 禮.⁷⁵⁰ Therefore, 豊 and 禮 are related to each other in both sound and meaning.


Example 3:

Shuowen: 王, 善也。一曰像物出地挺生也。

Ting 王 denotes ‘good’. The character is also explained as depicting the sprout sticking out (*ting* 挺) of the earth.

Duanzhu: 王、挺疊韻。⁷⁵¹

王 and 挺 are rhymed with each other.

Note: 王 (upright) is the phonetic element of 挺 (to stand upright). 王 /*thingx/ and 挺 /*dingx/ are not only rhymed syllables belonging to the same rhyme group of *geng* 耕 /*-ing/, but also have similar initial consonants, which are tongue-head sounds. Thus, 王 and 挺 are near homonyms. Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. The oracle bone inscription of 王 is written as , resembling a person standing upright on the ground. 王 is the proto-form of 挺 (straighten up, to stick out).⁷⁵² In He Linyi’s *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, it also states that 王 is the original character for 挺.⁷⁵³ Therefore, 王 is related to 挺 in both sound and meaning.

Example 4:

Shuowen: 羊, 祥也。

Yang 羊 (sheep) signifies ‘favourable omen’ (*xiang* 祥).

Duanzhu: 羊、祥疊韻。⁷⁵⁴

羊 and 祥 are rhymed with each other.

Note: 羊 (sheep) is the phonetic element of 祥 (favourable omen). Since 羊 /*rang/ and

⁷⁴⁹ Yin Liyun, *Hanzi ziyuan xitong yanjiu*, p. 168.

⁷⁵⁰ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 1261.

⁷⁵¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 391.

⁷⁵² Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 727.

⁷⁵³ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 800.

⁷⁵⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 146.

祥 /*rjang/ are not only rhymed syllables belonging to the same rhyme group of yang 陽 /*-ang/, but also have the same initial consonant /*r-/. 羊 and 祥 are near homonyms. Duan's phonetic analysis was partly correct.⁷⁵⁵ Lin Yin presents the semantic relationship between 羊 and 祥 and suggests that '祥 derives from 羊. Sheep are meek and beneficial to people and thus symbolise good luck.'⁷⁵⁶ In ancient scripts, 羊 is often used for 祥.⁷⁵⁷ An example illustrating the link between 羊 and 祥 can be found in the sentence 'youkong houshi zisun buneng jingjun yiyang 有恐後世子孫不能敬著以羊' (They feared that their descendants might not revere the ghosts and spirits sufficiently to receive their blessing) from *Mozi* 墨子.⁷⁵⁸ In this instance, the character 羊 is used for 祥, denoting 'blessing'. Therefore, here Xu Shen used 祥 to explain 羊, and Duan pointed out their phonetic relationship.

Example 5:

Shuowen: 古，故也。

Gu 古 denotes 'the past or the old' (*gu* 故).

Duanzhu: 故者，凡事之所以然。而所以然皆備於古。故曰古，故也。⁷⁵⁹

Gu 故 means 'the reason for things'. The reason usually stems from past (古) experiences. Therefore, here 古 is said to signify 'the past or the old' (故).

Note: 古 (past, ancient) serves as the phonetic element of 故 (past, old). *Erya* also employs 故 (the past or the old) to elucidate the meaning of 古.⁷⁶⁰ *Ziyuan* notes that 古 is the proto-form of 故. Before 故 was created, 古 was used for 故.⁷⁶¹ Both Wang Li and Schuessler

⁷⁵⁵ According to Baxter and Sagart's reconstruction system, the prefix /*s-/ has a denominative function and derives the adjective 祥 /*s-ɕaŋ/ (auspicious) out of the noun 羊 /*ɕaŋ/ (sheep). See Laurent Sagart's *The Roots of Old Chinese*, pp. 70–73.

⁷⁵⁶ Lin Yin, *Wenzixue gaishuo*, p. 136.

⁷⁵⁷ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 4.

⁷⁵⁸ Translated following Wang Rongpei and Wang Hong with slight modifications. *Mozi* 墨子, trans. Wang Rongpei 汪榕培 and Wang Hong 王宏 (Hunan: Hunan People's Publishing House, 2006), p. 249.

⁷⁵⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 70.

⁷⁶⁰ *Erya*, notes by Guo Pu, expanded annotations by Xing Bing, p. 40.

⁷⁶¹ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 250.

classify 古 and 故 as cognate words related to the sense of ‘old’.⁷⁶² Here Duan clarified the reason why 故 could be used to explain 古.

The above examples illustrate the utilisation of phonetic compounds to interpret phonetic elements. Some phonetic compounds are etymologically related to their phonetic elements and thus they are semantically related to each other. This may explain why the phonetic compound can be used as a glossing word for its phonetic element.

5.1.2 Explaining a Phonetic Compound through Reference to a Phonetic Element

The following examples are selected from the *Shuowen* in which Xu Shen used the phonetic element as a glossing word to interpret the phonetic compound. Duan further clarified the sound-meaning relations between the glossed word and the glossing word. Explaining a phonetic compound through reference to its phonetic element presents the potential etymological relationship between the glossed word and the glossing word. Moreover, it demonstrates Duan’s principle that ‘a character’s meaning is contained in its sound’.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 繪，會五采繡也。从糸，會聲。

Hui 繪 denotes ‘to embroider by assembling (*hui* 會) various colours.’ The character is comprised of *mi* 糸 (silk) with *hui* 會 (to assemble) as the phonetic.


Duanzhu: 會、繪疊韻。⁷⁶³

會 and 繪 are rhymed with each other.

Note: 會 (to assemble) serves as the phonetic element of 繪 (to embroider by assembling various colours). Since 會/*gwadh/ and 繪/*gwadh/ are not only rhymed syllables but also have the same initial consonant /*gw-/, 繪 and 會 are homonyms. Duan’s phonetic analysis

⁷⁶² Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 125. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 259.

⁷⁶³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 656.

was partly correct. The oracle bone inscription of 會 is written as , constructed by a lid, grain, and a vessel, indicating its original meaning of ‘assembling’.⁷⁶⁴ In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, 繪 and 會 are considered cognate words.⁷⁶⁵ Yin Jiming also classifies 繪 and 會 as cognate words that convey the meaning of ‘assembling’.⁷⁶⁶ In the Warring States scripts, 會 is used for 繪.⁷⁶⁷ An example illustrating the link between 會 and 繪 can be found in the sentence ‘ri, yue, xingchen, shan, long, huachong, zuohui 日、月、星辰、山、龍、華蟲，作會’ (The sun, the moon, the stars, the mountain, the dragons, and the flowery fowl [the pheasant], which are embroidered [on the upper garment]) from the *Book of Documents*.⁷⁶⁸ In this context, 會 is utilised to signify 繪 (to embroider by assembling various colours). Therefore, 會 is related to 繪 in both sound and meaning.


Example 2:

Shuowen: 婢，女之卑者也。从女从卑，卑亦聲。

Bi 婢 refers to ‘the female in a low status (*bei* 卑)’. The character is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) and *bei* 卑 (low, degrading). 卑 also stands for the sound.

Duanzhu: 鄭注《曲禮》曰：「婢之言卑也。」⁷⁶⁹

Zheng Xuan commented in the *Book of Rites*, ‘*Quli*’ that ‘as to the way *bi* 婢 (female servant) is spoken, it is equivalent to *bei* 卑.’

Note: 卑 (low, degrading) is the phonetic element of 婢 (female servants). The bronze inscription of 卑 is written as , depicting working with tools held in hand. Since such labour is typically associated with people of low status, 卑 is used to signify ‘low or

⁷⁶⁴ Zou Xiaoli 鄒曉麗 (1937–2017), *Jichu hanzi xingyi shiyuan* 基礎漢字形義釋源 [The Explanation of the Origins of the Forms of Meanings of Basic Chinese Characters] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), p. 124.

⁷⁶⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 514. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 259.

⁷⁶⁶ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 3, p. 1627.

⁷⁶⁷ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 892.

⁷⁶⁸ *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge, vol. III, p. 80.

⁷⁶⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 42.

degrading’.⁷⁷⁰ 婢 refers to ‘female servant’ who holds a low status. Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 卑 and 婢 as cognate words related to the sense of ‘low or degrading’.⁷⁷¹ Therefore, 卑 is related to 婢 in both sound and meaning.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 駕，馬在軛中。从馬，加聲。

Jia 駕 denotes ‘a horse under a yoke’. The character is comprised of *ma* 馬 (horse) with *jia* 加 (to add) as the phonetic element.

Duanzhu: 駕之言以車加於馬也。⁷⁷²

駕 signifies ‘to attach (*jia* 加) the carriage to the horses.

Note: 加 (to add) serves as the phonetic element of 駕 (to drive a horse). In ancient times, the horse would typically be attached to the carriage for transportation. An example illustrating the link between 駕 and 加 can be found in the sentence ‘*qiluan zhiyi, buke jiayi* 其亂至矣，不可駕矣’ (The disorder [of the Shang dynasty] has reached its worst point. It could not be worse) from *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei).⁷⁷³ Gao You 高誘 (fl.180 CE) noted that ‘駕 means “to add” (加).’⁷⁷⁴ Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 加 and 駕 as cognate words.⁷⁷⁵ Therefore, 加 is used as a glossing word to explain 駕 as they are associated with the concept of ‘attaching’.

Example 4:

Shuowen: 唬，虎聲也。从口虎。

Hu 唬 means ‘the roaring of a tiger (*hu* 虎)’. The character is comprised of *kou* 口 (mouth) and *hu* 虎 (tiger).

⁷⁷⁰ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 226.

⁷⁷¹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 114. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 158.

⁷⁷² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 469.

⁷⁷³ *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 [The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei], trans. Zhai Jiangyue 翟江月 (Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2005), p. 607.

⁷⁷⁴ Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (292–ca.235 BCE), *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 [The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei], notes by Gao You 高誘 (fl.180 CE), ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 848, p. 396.

⁷⁷⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 454. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 301.

Duanzhu: 虎亦聲也。⁷⁷⁶

虎 also stands for the sound.

Note: 虎 (tiger) serves as the phonetic element of 唬 (the roaring of a tiger). In Wang Li's *Tongyuan zidian*, 虎 and 唬 are considered cognate words.⁷⁷⁷ Therefore, 唬 is related in both sound and meaning to 虎.

The examples above illustrate that the phonetic elements of some phonetic compounds not only denote the pronunciation but also convey meaning. Thus, the phonetic element can be used as a glossing word for the phonetic compound. Moreover, the phonetic element may also contain the etymon of the entire character.

5.1.3 Explaining a Phonetic Compound through Reference to another Phonetic Compound Which Shares the Same Phonetic Element

The following examples are selected from the *Shuowen* in which Xu Shen explained a character by referencing another phonetic compound sharing the same phonetic element. Duan further clarified the connection between the two phonetic compounds in terms of sound and meaning. This reflects the potential etymological link between the two phonetic compounds and also demonstrates Duan's principle that 'homonyms often share a similar meaning'.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 城，以盛民也。

Cheng 城 (a city) is a place which contains (*cheng* 盛) people.

Duanzhu: 言盛者，如黍稷之在器中也。⁷⁷⁸

盛 indicates that it (i.e., the city containing people) is akin to the utensil containing millet and wheat.

⁷⁷⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 62.

⁷⁷⁷ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 141. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 259.

⁷⁷⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 695.

Note: The glossed word 城 (city) and the glossing word 盛 (containing) share the same phonetic element *cheng* 成. In the *Shuowen*, 盛 is explained as ‘millet being placed in containers for use in sacrificial ceremonies’.⁷⁷⁹ 城 and 盛 share the common sense of ‘containing’. Ancient texts, such as *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Commentary on the Water Classic) and *Shiming*, utilise 盛 (containing) to elucidate the meaning of 城.⁷⁸⁰ In Schuessler’s *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, *cheng* 成 (to complete, to build), *cheng* 盛 (to fill), and *cheng* 城 (city) are considered cognate words.⁷⁸¹ Yin Jiming also classifies 盛 and 城 as cognate words that have the meaning of ‘containing’.⁷⁸² Therefore, 城 and 盛 are related to each other in both sound and meaning.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 璪, 玉飾如水藻之文。

Zao 璪 signifies the jade ornaments that resemble the patterning of algae (*zao* 藻).

Duanzhu: 璪、藻疊韻。⁷⁸³

璪 and 藻 are rhymed with each other.

Note: The glossed word 璪 (the jade ornaments) and the glossing word 藻 (algae) share the same phonetic element *zao* 藻. 璪 /*tsagwx/ and 藻 /*tsagwx/ are not only rhymed syllables but also have the same initial consonant /*ts-/; therefore, 璪 and 藻 are homonyms. Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. Both 璪 and 藻 contain the sense of ‘algae’. Wang Yun noted in *Shuowen judou* that ‘璪 is often written as 藻 in ancient texts’.⁷⁸⁴ Therefore, 璪 and 藻 are related to each other in both sound and meaning.

Example 3:

⁷⁷⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 213.

⁷⁸⁰ *Guxun huizuan* 故訓匯纂 [Compilation of Ancient Glosses], eds. Zong Fubang 宗福邦, Chen Shirao 陳世饒, and Xiao Haibo 蕭海波 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2003), p. 820.

⁷⁸¹ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 185.

⁷⁸² Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 489.

⁷⁸³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 14.

⁷⁸⁴ Wang Yun, *Shuowen judou*, ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu, vol. 216, p. 405.

Shuowen: 招，樹搖兒。

Shao 招 denotes ‘the movement of trees swaying’.

Duanzhu: 招之言招也。樹高大則如能招風者然。⁷⁸⁵

招 is equivalent to *zhao* 招 (to beckon). If a tree is tall, it appears as though it can summon the wind.

Note: The glossed word 招 (the movement of trees swaying) and the glossing word 招 (to beckon) used by Duan share the same phonetic element *zhao* 召. Gui Fu asserted that there is interchangeable usage between 招 and 招.⁷⁸⁶ *The Collective Commentaries of Ancient Scripts* also notes that ‘招 can be used for 招’.⁷⁸⁷ In the *Shuowen*, 招 is explained as ‘to beckon with the hand’.⁷⁸⁸ Both 招 and 招 are related to the sense of ‘swaying’.

Example 4:

Shuowen: 詁，訓故言也。

Gu 詁 denotes ‘to explicate the old (*gu* 故) words’.

Duanzhu: 《毛傳》曰：「詁」言古之善言也。以「古」釋「詁」，正同許以「故」釋「詁」。⁷⁸⁹

Mao's Commentary of Poetry interprets *gu* 詁 as ‘the ancient beneficial words’. Mao’s use of 古 (old, ancient) to explain 詁 is akin to Xu’s use of 故 (old, past) to explain 詁.

Note: The glossed word 詁 (to interpret the old words) and the glossing word 故 (old, past) share the same phonetic element *gu* 古 (old, ancient). Duan’s annotation points out that 古, 故, and 詁 are semantically related to one another. Both Wang Li and Yin Jiming classify 古, 故, and 詁 as cognate words related to the concept of ‘old’.⁷⁹⁰ Therefore, 詁 and 故 are related to each other in both sound and meaning.

Example 5:

Shuowen: 詁，言之訥也。

⁷⁸⁵ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 253.

⁷⁸⁶ Gui Fu, *Shuowen jiezi yizheng*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 209, p. 485.

⁷⁸⁷ Li Pu, *Guwenzi gulin*, vol. 5, p. 844.

⁷⁸⁸ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 607.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 93.

⁷⁹⁰ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 125. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 263.

Ne 讷 denotes ‘to speak slowly or cautiously’ (*ne* 讷).

Duanzhu: 此與言部訥音義皆同，故以訥釋讷。⁷⁹¹

讷 has the same sound and meaning as the character 訥 under the classifier *yan* 言 (words, speech). Thus, 讷 is used to explain 讷.

Note: The glossed word 讷 /*nəp/ (slow of speech) and the glossing word 訥 /*nəp/ (to speak slowly or cautiously) share the same phonetic element *nei* 內. Yin Liyun states that 訥 and 讷 are completely the same in sound and meaning. They are actually variant forms of the same character.⁷⁹² Li Xueqin notes that *kou* 口 (mouth) and *yan* 言 (words, speech) can be used interchangeably when serving as classifiers. Thus, 讷 has the same sound and meaning as 訥.⁷⁹³

Example 6:

Shuowen: 柴，燒柴焚燎以祭天神。

Chai 柴 means ‘to burn wood (*chai* 柴) in sacrifice to the gods of heaven’.

Duanzhu: 柴與柴同「此」聲。⁷⁹⁴

Both 柴 and 柴 have *ci* 此 as their phonetic element.

Note: The glossed word 柴 (to burn wood in sacrifice) and the glossing word 柴 (firewood) share the same phonetic element *ci* 此. Wang Li notes that 柴 is derived from 柴. They are cognate words.⁷⁹⁵ An example illustrating the link between 柴 and 柴 can be found in the sentence ‘*sui eryue, dong xunshou, zhiyu daizong, chai* 歲二月，東巡守，至於岱宗，柴’ (In the second month of the year, he made a tour of inspection eastwards, as far as Tae-tsung, where he presented a burnt-offering to Heaven) from the *Book of Documents*.⁷⁹⁶ Here the character 柴 is used for 柴, denoting a burnt-offering to Heaven. Therefore, 柴 and 柴 are

⁷⁹¹ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 88.

⁷⁹² Yin Liyun, *Hanzi ziyuan xitong yanjiu*, p. 295.

⁷⁹³ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 162.

⁷⁹⁴ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 4.

⁷⁹⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 112.

⁷⁹⁶ *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge, vol. III, p. 35.

related to each other in both sound and meaning.

Example 7:

Shuowen: 誨，曉教也。

Hui 誨 denotes ‘to teach’.

Duanzhu: 曉之以破其晦，是曰誨。⁷⁹⁷

To enlighten others is to break through their ignorance (*hui* 晦). This is the so-called 誨.

Note: The glossed word 誨 (to teach, to enlighten) and the glossing word 晦 (obscure) used by Duan share the same phonetic element *mei* 每. In the *Shuowen*, 晦 is explained as ‘the last day of the lunar month’.⁷⁹⁸ Xu Kai noted under the character 誨 in his *Shuowen xizhuan* that ‘it signifies instruction (誨) to dispel obscurity (晦) and ignorance’.⁷⁹⁹ In the oracle bone inscriptions, both 誨 and 晦 are written as 每.⁸⁰⁰ One may infer a semantic link between 誨 and 晦 due to their shared phonetic element, 每.

Example 8:

Shuowen: 宅，所託尻也。

Zhai 宅 denotes ‘a dwelling place where people settle (*tuo* 託)’.

Duanzhu: 託者，寄也。引伸之凡物所安皆曰宅。宅、託疊韻。⁸⁰¹

託 means to ‘to rely on’. 宅 is extended to denote any place where things settle. 宅 and 託 are rhymed with each other.

Note: The glossed word 宅 (a dwelling place) and the glossing word 託 (to lean upon) share the same phonetic element *tuo* 毛. Since 宅 /*drak/ and 託 /*thak/ are not only rhymed syllables belonging to the same rhyme group of *yu* 魚 /*-ak/, but also have similar initial consonants, which are tongue-head sounds, 宅 and 託 are near homonyms. Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. In both Wang Li’s and Yin Jiming’s dictionaries, 宅 and 託 are

⁷⁹⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 91.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 308.

⁷⁹⁹ Xu Kai 徐鍇 (920–974), *Shuowen xizhuan* 說文繫傳 [Filiations of and Commentary on the *Shuowen jiezi*], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 223, p. 443.

⁸⁰⁰ Li Pu, *Guwenzi gulin*, vol. 2, p. 735, vol. 6, p. 411.

⁸⁰¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 341.

considered cognate words related to the sense of ‘relying on’.⁸⁰² Therefore, 宅 and 託 are related to each other in both sound and meaning.

Example 9:

Shuowen: 窘, 羣居也。

Qun 窘 means ‘living in groups’.

Duanzhu: 以疊韻爲訓。⁸⁰³

窘 is glossed by 羣 based on rhyming.

Note: The glossed word 窘 (living in groups) and the glossing word 羣 (group, crowd) share the same phonetic element *jun* 君. Since 窘 /*gwjiən/ and 羣 /*gwjiən/ are not only rhymed syllables, but also have the same initial consonant /*gw-/, 窘 and 羣 are homonyms. Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. In the *Shuowen*, 羣 is explained as ‘group’. Duan annotated that ‘sheep gather in flocks, while dogs are solitary. 羣 is then extended to denote all kinds of gatherings’.⁸⁰⁴ In both Wang Li’s and Yin Jiming’s dictionaries, 窘 and 羣 are considered cognate words related to the meaning of ‘grouping or assembling’.⁸⁰⁵ Therefore, 窘 and 羣 are related to each other in both sound and meaning.

The above examples show that the glossing word and the glossed word share the same phonetic element which contains their semantic connection.

5.2 Explaining a Character by Means of the Sound

In *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*, John DeFrancis asserts that ‘to understand this crucial matter of fit between sound and symbol, we need to think of each character in the phonetic compound category in terms of two symbols and two sounds. One symbol is the phonetic element; the other is the whole character of which the phonetic element is the part.

⁸⁰² Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 292. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 67.

⁸⁰³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 343.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 148.

⁸⁰⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p.534. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 2, p. 753.

One sound is the pronunciation of the phonetic element; the other is the pronunciation of the whole character.’⁸⁰⁶ DeFrancis’s assertion suggests that recognising the significance of sound embodied in the phonetic element and the whole character is imperative for understanding the source of the meaning of a character.

Both the *Shuowen* and the *Duanzhu* offered ample sound glosses by referencing the sound that encapsulates the source of a particular word. In regard to the link between the etymon and the meaning of a character, Huang Kan 黃侃 once remarked:

初文五百，秦篆三千，許氏所載，乃幾盈萬，是文字古簡而今繁也。聲音、訓詁亦然，故形、聲、義三者，莫不由簡趨繁，此勢之必至也。然繁由簡出，則簡可統繁，簡既孳繁，則繁必歸簡，於至繁之字義，求至簡之語根，文字語言訓詁之根本，胥在是矣。⁸⁰⁷

[In archaic times,] there were only about five hundred proto-forms of Chinese characters, and the number rose to three thousand in the Qin’s seal script.⁸⁰⁸ Xu Shen’s collection [of characters in the *Shuowen*] reached nearly ten thousand. Thus, the number of characters increase over time. So do the sounds and glosses. Form, sound, and meaning tend towards complexity from simplicity. This is an inevitable result of language evolution. However, as complexity emerges from simplicity, simplicity can still govern complexity. Just as simplicity gives rise to complexity, the complexities of linguistic phenomena can ultimately be traced back to simple etymons. Seeking intricate meanings through simple etymons forms the basis of exegesis.

Huang’s remark echoes Duan’s assertion: ‘The ancient characters are few, but their meanings are inclusive; the modern characters are many, but their meanings are specific’ (*Guzi shao er yigai, jinzi duo er yibie* 古字少而義賅，今字多而義別).⁸⁰⁹ Shen Jianshi stated that ‘language must have its root. The sound that initially conveys an idea serves as the root, and thus it is the foundation of language’.⁸¹⁰ The root words are the origins from which later

⁸⁰⁶ John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), p.101.

⁸⁰⁷ Chen Xinxiong and Zeng Rongpan, *Wenzixue*, p. 183.

⁸⁰⁸ The Ancient Dictionary *Cangjiepian* 倉頡篇 compiled by Li Si 李斯 (284–ca.208 BCE) from the Qin dynasty collects three thousand and three hundred characters.

⁸⁰⁹ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 392.

⁸¹⁰ Shen Jianshi, *Shen Jianshi xueshu lunwenji*, p. 168. The original Chinese text is: ‘語言必有根。語根者，最初表示概念之音，為語言形式之基礎。’

words are derived. Words derived from the same root are phonetically related. In other words, they are either homonyms or share similarities in the initial or the final sounds. Zhao Cheng remarks that in Old Chinese, when new words are derived from a root word, subtle differences in pronunciation are used to differentiate meanings. The representation of the derived words in the writing system comes much later. The change in sound originates from the word and the language. The writing system is the symbol used to record the language.⁸¹¹ Zhao's words demonstrate the subtle variation of sound in the word derivation, emphasising that the root words and the derived words are phonetically related.

As 'sound and meaning spring from the same source', characters with the same or similar pronunciation tend to have a similar meaning. Sound glosses by alliteration and rhyming respectively represent the cognate links in initials and rhymes between the glossing words and the glossed words. The etymon contained in the initial and the rhyme of a character both contribute to the meaning of the entire character. In his annotations to the *Shuowen*, Duan noted the phonetic relationship between the glossed words and the glossing words, especially in cases of rhyming. However, Duan's analysis of the phonetic relationship in terms of initials was not sufficient because his understanding of initials in Old Chinese was limited. Therefore, he placed more emphasis on rhymes.

In the following section, I provide examples from the *Shuowen* and the *Duanzhu*, which illustrate the semantic relationship between words that share the same or similar pronunciation respectively represented by homonym, alliteration, and rhyming. Moreover, in some of the following examples, I point out the phonetic relationship between the initials of the glossing words and the glossed words that Duan did not mention in his annotations.

⁸¹¹ Zhao Cheng, *Jiagu wenzixue gangyao*, p. 58.

5.2.1 Word Gloss Using One Glossing Word Which Is Related in Sound and Meaning to the Glossed Word

In the *Shuowen*, some explanations employ a single glossing word as a sound gloss without supplementary explanations, reflecting Xu Shen's attempt to seek the etymon of the glossed word. Duan discerned the phonetic relationship between the glossed word and the glossing word, demonstrating his insights into the contribution of sound to the meaning.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 尾，微也。

Wei 尾 (tail) means 'minute or subtle' (*wei* 微).

Duanzhu: 微當作散。散，細也。此以疊韻爲訓。《方言》曰：尾，盡也。尾，梢也。引伸訓爲後……古亦段微爲尾。⁸¹²

Wei 微 should be written as *wei* 散. 散 means 'minute or subtle'. The word gloss is based on rhyming. *Dialects* suggests that 尾 means 'end or tip' and is extended to denote 'back'... 微 was borrowed to represent 尾 in ancient times.

Note: The characters 尾 /*mjədx/ and 散 /*mjəd/ not only share the same final but also have the same initial consonant /*m-/ , rendering them homonyms. Duan's assessment of their phonetic relationship was partly correct. 尾 is semantically linked to 散 in the sense of 'small'. Ma Ruichen 馬瑞辰 (1777–1853) noted that '尾 is used to represent 微. The word "ziwei 孳尾" meaning "to copulate", as found in the *Book of Documents*, is recorded as "ziwei 字微" in *Records of the Grand Historian*.⁸¹³ 孳 and 字 are cognate words associated with the concept of 'breeding'.⁸¹⁴ Therefore, 尾 and 散 are not only phonetically identical but also semantically related.

Example 2:

⁸¹² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 406.

⁸¹³ Ma Ruichen 馬瑞辰 (1777-1853), *Maoshi zhuanjian tongshi* 毛詩傳箋通釋 [Explanations of the annotations of *Mao's Commentary of Poetry*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), p. 143.

⁸¹⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 94. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 633.

Shuowen: 水，準也。

Shui 水 (water) means ‘level’ (*zhun* 準).

Duanzhu: 準古音追上聲，此以疊韻爲訓……《釋名》曰：「水，準也。準，平也。」天下莫平於水。⁸¹⁵

準 is pronounced as the rising tone of *zhui* 追 in Old Chinese. 水 is interpreted as 準 based on rhyming....*Shiming* notes that ‘水 signifies level. Level means even.’ Nothing in the world is more level than water.

Note: The characters 準 /*tjənx/ and 追 /*trjəd/ have similar initial consonants, which are tongue-head sounds, and share the same main vowel. However, 水 /*hrjidx/ and 準 /*tjənx/ do not rhyme with each other because they belong to different rhyme groups, which are *zhi* 脂 /*-id/ and *wen* 文 /*-ən/ respectively. Thus, Duan’s phonetic analysis was incorrect. The character 準 is explained as ‘level’ in the *Shuowen*. Duan annotated that ‘準 refers to the levelness of water. There is nothing in the world more level than water.’⁸¹⁶ In ancient China, water was used to assess levelness, which is recorded in the *Zhou Rites*, ‘The Record of Examination of Crafts’.⁸¹⁷ Given that one of the defining characteristics of water is its levelness, 水 is associated with 準 in this sense.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 戶，護也。

Hu 戶 (single-leaved door) means ‘to protect’ (*hu* 護).⁸¹⁸

Duanzhu: 以疊韻爲訓。⁸¹⁹

戶 is interpreted as 護 based on rhyming.

Note: The characters 戶 /*gagx/ and 護 /*gwagh/ are not only rhymed syllables that belong to the same rhyme group of *yu* 魚 /*-ag/, but also have similar initial consonants,

⁸¹⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 521.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid, p. 565.

⁸¹⁷ Editorial Committee, *Hanyu dazidian*, p. 1655.

⁸¹⁸ The door which closes upon can protect people from the danger outside.

⁸¹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 592.

which are velar sounds. The character 護 is explained as ‘to protect’ in the *Shuowen*.⁸²⁰

Ancient dictionaries, such as *Jijiu pian*, *Shiming*, and *Guangya*, also utilise 護 (to protect) to elucidate the meaning of 戶.⁸²¹ Since one of the functions of a door is to protect people inside from the outside, 戶 is associated with 護 in this sense.


Example 4:

Shuowen: 天，顛也。

Tian 天 (sky) denotes ‘top’ (*dian* 顛).

Duanzhu: 此以同部疊韻為訓也。⁸²²

Tian 天 is interpreted as 顛 based on rhyming as they belong to the same rhyme group.

Note: The characters 天/*thin/ and 顛/*tin/ are not only rhymed syllables that belong to the *zhen* 真 /*-in/ rhyme group but also similar in initials. The former one is voiceless aspirated /*th-/, while the latter is voiceless unaspirated /*t-/. The oracle bone inscription of 天 is written as , stressing on the head of a man.⁸²³ The explanation of 顛 in the *Shuowen* is ‘head or top’.⁸²⁴ Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 天 and 顛 as cognate words related to the sense of ‘being on the top’.⁸²⁵ Therefore, 天 and 顛 are semantically and phonetically related to each other.

Example 5:

Shuowen: 葩，華也。

Pa 葩 (flower) means ‘flower or flowery’ (*hua* 華).

Duanzhu: 古光華字與花實字同義同音。葩之訓華者，艸木花也，亦華麗也。艸木花最麗。故凡物盛麗皆曰華。⁸²⁶

In ancient times, the word for ‘flowery’ (華) and the word for ‘flower’ (花) shared the

⁸²⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 95.

⁸²¹ *Guxun huizuan*, p. 851.

⁸²² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 1.


⁸²³ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 1.

⁸²⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 420.

⁸²⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 339. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 495.

⁸²⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 38.

same sound and meaning. 葩 is glossed as 華, which signifies both ‘flowers’ and ‘flowery’. As flowers are beautiful, all the flowery and splendid things are modified by the word 華.

Note: The characters 葩 /*phrag/ and 華 /*gwrag/ are rhymed syllables that belong to the same rhyme group of *yu* 魚 /*-ag/, but they have different initial consonants. The former is voiceless bilabial /*ph-/, while the latter is labiovelar /*gw-/. The Warring States script of 華 is written as , which depicts a flower.⁸²⁷ *Yupian* 玉篇 (Jade Chapters) explains the character 葩 as ‘flower or flowery’ (華).⁸²⁸ Zou Xiaoli notes that 華 and 花 are variant forms of the same character, denoting ‘flower’.⁸²⁹ Therefore, all the three characters 葩, 華, and 花 refer to ‘flower’. Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 華 and 花 as cognate words.⁸³⁰ Schuessler notes that 葩 /*phrag/ may have the same etymon as *ban* 瓣 /*brianh/ (petals of a flower).⁸³¹

Example 6:

Shuowen: 粗, 疏也。

Cu 粗 (large, rough) denotes ‘coarse or wide apart’ (*shu* 疏).

Duanzhu: <大雅>: 「彼疏斯稗。」箋云: 「疏, 麤也。」謂糲米也, 麤即粗。正與許書互相證。疏者, 通也。引伸之猶大也。⁸³²

In ‘Major Ode’, it is stated: ‘People eat coarse rice whereas he eats fine white rice’. Zheng’s annotation suggests that ‘疏 denotes coarse (*cu* 麤)’, indicating coarse rice. 麤 is equivalent to 粗. Zheng’s annotation and Xu’s explanation serve as reciprocal validation. 疏 means ‘accessible’. It is extended to denote ‘large’.

Note: The characters 粗 /*tshag/ and 疏 /*srjag/ have similar initial consonants, which are dental sibilants, and belong to the same rhyme group of *yu* 魚 /*-ag/. They are near

⁸²⁷ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 461.

⁸²⁸ Gu Yewang 顧野王 (519–581), *Yupian* 玉篇 [Jade Chapters], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 224, p. 117.

Yupian is an ancient dictionary compiled in the Northern and Southern dynasties.

⁸²⁹ Zou Xiaoli, *Jichu hanzi xingyi shiyuan*, p. 192.

⁸³⁰ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 141. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 283.

⁸³¹ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 408.

⁸³² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 334.

homonyms. 粗 and 疏 are semantically related in the sense of ‘coarse or wide apart’. In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, 粗 and 疏 are considered cognate words.⁸³³ Therefore, 粗 and 疏 are semantically and phonetically related to each other.

Example 7:

Shuowen: 木，冒也。

Mu 木 (tree, wood) means ‘to emerge or cover’ (*mao* 冒).

Duanzhu: 以疊韻爲訓。⁸³⁴

Mu 木 is interpreted through a rhymed syllable (冒).

Note: The characters 木 /*muk/ and 冒 /*məgw/ belong to different rhyme groups, which are *hou* 候 /*-uk/ and *you* 幽 /*-əgw/ rhyme groups, respectively. Thus, Duan’s phonetic analysis was incorrect. While trees are the plants that emerge from or cover the ground, the semantic relationship between 木 and 冒 is not apparent. Modern scholars, such as Zhao Keqin and Zhao Zhenduo, consider the gloss that explain 木 as ‘to emerge’ (i.e., *mu*, *maoye* 木，冒也) to be far-fetched, as the glossing word 冒 is also used to explain other words, such as *mao* 毛 (hair), *wu* 霧 (fog), and *mu* 母 (mother), by Han scholars.⁸³⁵

Example 8:

Shuowen: 八，別也。

Ba 八 (to divide, eight) denotes ‘to part or to separate’ (*bie* 別).

Duanzhu: 此以雙聲、疊韻說其義。⁸³⁶

Such explanation is based on alliterative syllables or rhymed syllables.


Note: The characters 八 /*priet/ and 別 /*bjiat/ have similar initial consonants, which are bilabial sounds, and also belong to the same rhyme group of *ji* 祭 /*-at/. The oracle bone

⁸³³ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p.167.

⁸³⁴ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 241.

⁸³⁵ See Zhao Keqin’s *Gudai hanyu cihui*, p. 216 and Zhao Zhenduo’s *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi*, p. 137.

⁸³⁶ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 49.

inscription of 八 is written as , depicting two parts opposite to each other. Yin Liyun notes that 八 is the proto-form of 別.⁸³⁷ Both 八 and 別 are related to the notion of ‘parting or separating’. Therefore, 八 and 別 are semantically and phonetically related to each other.

Example 9:

Shuowen: 龜，舊也。

Gui 龜 (turtle) means ‘old’ (*jiu* 舊).

Duanzhu: 此以疊韻爲訓。門聞、戶護之例……舊本鴟舊字，段借爲故舊，卽久字也。⁸³⁸

Gui 龜 is interpreted through a rhymed syllable (舊). It is the same case as ‘*men* 門 (gate) being glossed by *wen* 聞 (to hear)’ and ‘*hu* 戶 (door) being glossed by *hu* 護 (to protect)’...*Jiu* 舊 originally signifies ‘owl’. It was later borrowed for ‘old’, which is equivalent to the sense of *jiu* 久 (long time).

Note: The characters 龜 /*kwjæg/ and 舊 /*gwjæg/ are not only rhymed syllables that belong to the same rhyme group of *zhi* 之 /*-æg/, but also have similar initials which are velar sounds. In the chapter ‘*bushi* 卜筮 (Divination)’ from *Lunheng* 論衡 (Discourses and Weighing), it is also stated that ‘龜 is equivalent to 舊 (old).’⁸³⁹ Due to their long lifespan, turtles are commonly associated with the concept of ‘old age’.

Jiu 舊 /*gwjæg/ and *jiu* 久 /*kjægx/ have similar initial consonants, which are velar sounds, and have the same final. Thus, 舊 and 久 are near homonyms. 久 is the proto-form of *jiu* 灸 (to cauterise). Since the mark caused by cauterisation lasts a long time and is difficult to remove, 久 is extended to denote ‘long time’.⁸⁴⁰ As people and things become old due to the passage of a long time, 舊 and 久 are semantically related. The two characters are classified

⁸³⁷ Yin Liyun, *Hanzi ziyuan xitong yanjiu*, p. 381.

⁸³⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 685.

⁸³⁹ Wang Chong 王充 (27–97), *Lunheng* 論衡 [Discourses and Weighing], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 862, p. 283.

⁸⁴⁰ Yin Liyun, *Hanzi ziyuan xitong yanjiu*, p. 222.

as cognate words in Wang Li's *Tongyuan zidian*.⁸⁴¹



Example 10:

Shuowen: 晉, 進也。

Jin 晉 (to advance) denotes 'to go forward' (*jin* 進).

Duanzhu: 以疊韻爲訓。⁸⁴²

晉 is interpreted through a rhymed syllable (進).

Note: As the *fanqie* spelling of 晉 /*tsjin/ and 進 /*tsjinh/ are both *jiren* 即刃,⁸⁴³ the two characters are homonyms. They are not only rhymed syllables but also alliterative syllables. Thus, Duan's phonetic analysis was partly correct. *Erya* also utilises 進 (to go forward) to elucidate the meaning of 晉.⁸⁴⁴ The oracle bone inscription of 晉 is written as , which depicts the sunlight advancing as swiftly as an arrow.⁸⁴⁵ The oracle bone inscription of 進 is written as , which depicts a bird stepping forward. 進 is extended to denote 'to go forward or to advance'.⁸⁴⁶ 晉 and 進 share the common sense of 'going forward'. Hence, the two characters are linked both phonetically and semantically.

Example 11:

Shuowen: 迂, 往也。

Wang 迂 (to go to) denotes 'to go toward' (*wang* 往).

Duanzhu: 迂、往疊韻。⁸⁴⁷

迂 and 往 are rhymed syllables.

Note: The characters 迂 /*kwjang/ and 往 /*gwjang/ have similar initial consonants, which are labiovelars, and also have the same final. They are near homonyms. Duan's phonetic analysis was partly correct. The character 往 is explained as 'to go to' in the

⁸⁴¹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 77.

⁸⁴² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 306.

⁸⁴³ Chen Pengnian, *Xinjiao songben guangyun*, p. 71.

⁸⁴⁴ *Erya*, notes by Guo Pu, expanded annotations by Xing Bing, p. 28.

⁸⁴⁵ Ji Xusheng, *Shuowen xinzheng*, p. 532.

⁸⁴⁶ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 116.

⁸⁴⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 71.

Shuowen.⁸⁴⁸ Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 迕 and 往 as cognate words, conveying the sense of ‘going toward’.⁸⁴⁹ Therefore, 迕 and 往, are linked both phonetically and semantically.

5.2.2 Word Gloss Using One Glossing Word Which Is Mutually Explanatory with the Glossed Word

In the *Shuowen*, in some word glosses, the glossed word and the glossing word are mutually explanatory. Duan clarified their phonetic relationship.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 考, 老也。⁸⁵⁰

Kao 考 (advanced in years, deceased ancestor) denotes ‘old’ (*lao* 老).

Shuowen: 老, 考也。

Lao 老 (old) denotes ‘aged or deceased ancestor’ (*kao* 考).

Duanzhu: 老考以疊韻爲訓。⁸⁵¹

老 and 考 are mutually explanatory through rhyming.

Note: The characters 考 /*khəgwɣ/ and 老 /*ləgwɣ/ are rhymed syllables which belong to the same rhyme group of *you* 幽 /*-əgw/. Mei Tsu-lin points out that in the oracle bone inscriptions and the bronze inscriptions, it is often found that 考 and 老 are written with one and the same graph 𠄎.⁸⁵²

Example 2:

Shuowen: 併, 竝也。⁸⁵³

Bing 併 means ‘to combine’ (*bing* 竝).

⁸⁴⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 76.

⁸⁴⁹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 369. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 508.

⁸⁵⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 402.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

⁸⁵² Mei Tsu-lin, ‘Three Notes on Ancient Chinese Scripts and Old Chinese Phonology’, *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics* 1.2 (2007): 21.

⁸⁵³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 376.

Shuowen: 竝，併也。

Bing 竝 (to combine) means ‘to bring two things together’ (*bing* 併).

Duanzhu: 人部「併」下曰：「竝也。」二篆爲轉注。⁸⁵⁴

The character *bing* 併, with the classifier *ren* 人 (people), is defined as ‘to combine’ (*bing* 竝). 竝 and 併 are mutually explanatory characters.

Note: The characters 竝 /*pjingh/ and 併 /*pjingh/ are homonyms. Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 竝 and 併 as cognate words, conveying the sense of ‘combining’.⁸⁵⁵

Example 3:

Shuowen: 系，繫也。

Xi 系 denotes ‘to link or to tie’.

Duanzhu: 縣各本作繫，非其義，今正。𠄎部曰：「縣者，系也」，引申爲凡總持之稱。故系與縣二篆爲轉注。⁸⁵⁶

The word *xuan* 縣 is written as *xi* 繫 in other versions, which is not correct (i.e., here the glossing word 繫 should be written as 縣). The character 縣 under the classifier *xiao* 𠄎 is explained as ‘to tie’ and is extended to denote ‘to hold’. 系 and 縣 are mutually explanatory characters.

Shuowen: 縣，繫也。

Xuan 縣 denotes ‘to link or to tie’ (*xi* 系).

Duanzhu: 繫當作系。繫者繫纒也。一名惡絮……六朝以後舍系不用，而段繫爲系。⁸⁵⁷

The glossing word 繫 (catkin) should be written as 系. 繫 means coarse silk. It is also called ‘*exu* 惡絮’ (rough silk floss)... since the Six dynasties, the character 系 has been obsolete, and 繫 was then used for 系 (to link, to tie).⁸⁵⁸

Note: The characters 系 /*gigh/ and 縣 /*gwianh/ have similar initials which are velar sounds. 系 /*gigh/ and 繫 /*gigh/ are homonyms. The oracle bone inscription of 系 is written



⁸⁵⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 505.

⁸⁵⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 352. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 168.

⁸⁵⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 648.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 428.

⁸⁵⁸ In Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction system, the /*N-/ prefix typically derived stative intransitive verbs, often out of transitive verbs. *Xi* 繫 /*keks/ meaning ‘to tie, to attach or to connect’ is a transitive verb. A stative verb *xi* 系 /*N-keks/ meaning ‘be attached to or be connected’ was derived through prefixation of /*N-/. See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, ‘Word Formation in Old Chinese’, *New Approaches to Chinese Word Formation*, ed. by Jerome Packard, p. 46.

as , depicting the shape of tying a thread.⁸⁵⁹ The bronze inscription of 縣 is written as , depicting a hanging head.⁸⁶⁰ The original meaning of 繫 is ‘rough silk floss’. It is extended to denote ‘to fasten or to tie’.⁸⁶¹ The characters 系, 縣, and 繫 are all related to the meaning of ‘tying’. Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 系 and 繫 as cognate words, which share the meaning of ‘linking’.⁸⁶² They exclude 縣 probably because 縣 is more concerned with the notion of hanging rather than tying.

5.2.3 Word Gloss Using Two Glossing Words Both of Which Are Related in Sound and Meaning to the Glossed Word

Duan’s principle of *shengyi tongyuan* can be represented by the initial and the rhyme of a character respectively bearing the linguistic source of the character. In his *Shengyun yuyuan zidian* 聲韻語源字典 (Etymological Dictionary Based on Initials and Finals), Qi Chongtian 齊沖天 suggests:

聲訓的條例，實際只有一條，就是同音相訓。不過，有的是就整個音節，全部意義，一次訓解完畢；有的則是分聲母和韻母，作「雙聲為訓」與「疊韻為訓」兩方面的工作，然後作語音上和意義上的結合。⁸⁶³

There is only one principle regarding the sound gloss, which is the interpretation owing to the sound identification. Nevertheless, some sound glosses interpret the meaning of a character through homophony (the combination of initial and rhyme) at one time. Some interpret the character separately through alliteration and rhyming. In this case, it is the combination of the potential etymological meanings contained in the initial and the rhyme, respectively, that constitutes the explanation of the entire character.

In the *Shuowen*, there is a type of sound gloss in which the two glossing words each bear the semantic relation to the glossed word. In addition, the two glossing words are respectively

⁸⁵⁹ Ji Xusheng, *Shuowen xinzheng*, p. 884.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 703.

⁸⁶¹ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 1150.

⁸⁶² Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 102. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 526.

⁸⁶³ Qi Chongtian 齊沖天, *Shengyun yuyuan zidian* 聲韻語源字典 [Etymological Dictionary Based on Initials and Finals] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), p. 87.

alliterative and rhymed with the glossed word. In other words, both the two glossing words are phonetically and semantically related to the glossed word. Although Duan did not note this in his annotations, it demonstrates Duan's principle that 'a character's meaning is contained in its sound (initial + final)'. The following are some of the examples.

Example 1:

In the *Shuowen*, *qiao* 喬 is explained as 'high and crooked'. It is comprised of *yao* 夭 and an abbreviated form of *gao* 高.⁸⁶⁴ One of the glossing words and the component, *gao* 高, means 'high'.⁸⁶⁵ The other component is *qiao* 夭 meaning 'crooked'.⁸⁶⁶ The sounds and meanings of 喬, 高, and 夭 are shown in Table 12 below. We can see that 喬/*kjagw/ and 高/*kagw/ have the same initial /*k-/, whereas 喬/*kjagw/ and 夭/*jagw/ have the same final /*-jagw/. Moreover, 喬 denoting high and crooked, consists of the meanings of both 高 (high) and 夭 (crooked). Namely, 高 and 夭 are both related to 喬 in sound and meaning.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
<i>gao</i> 高	/*kagw/	高 and 喬 have the same initial consonant /*k-/.	high
<i>qiao</i> 喬	/*kjagw/		high and crooked
<i>yao</i> 夭	/*jagw/	夭 and 喬 have the same final /*-jagw/.	crooked

Table 12

Example 2:

Shuowen: 氓，民也。从民，亡聲。

Meng 氓 denotes 'people'. It is comprised of *min* 民 (people) with *wang* 亡 (to exile, to run away) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此則氓與民小別。蓋自他歸往之民則謂之氓，故字从民亡。⁸⁶⁷

氓 is subtly different from *min* 民 (people). 氓 (non-native) denotes people who come from elsewhere to settle in other places, as such, it is comprised of 民 (people) and

⁸⁶⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 499.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 230.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 498.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 633.

wang 亡 (to exile, to run away).

Note: The character 氓 /*mrang/ has the same initial consonant /*m-/ as 民 /*mjæn/ and the same rhyme /*-ang/ as 亡 /*mjang/. Moreover, the meaning of 氓 (immigrants) is made up of the meanings of 民 (people) and 亡 (to exile, to run away). In Wang Li's *Tongyuan zidian*, 氓 and 民 are considered cognate words.⁸⁶⁸

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
min 民 ⁸⁶⁹	/*mjæn/	民 and 氓 have the same initial consonant /*m-/	people
meng 氓	/*mrang/		immigrants
wang 亡 ⁸⁷⁰	/*mjang/	亡 and 氓 belong to the same rhyme group of yang 陽 /*-ang/.	to exile, to run away

Table 13

Example 3:

Shuowen: 緜，聯微也。⁸⁷¹

Mian 緜 signifies 'to join together (*lian* 聯) fine threads (*wei* 微)'.
Wei 微 is defined as 'to walk secretly'. It is comprised of *chi* 彳 (small step) with *wei* 微 (subtle, small) as the phonetic.

Shuowen: 微，隱行也。从彳，叢聲。

Wei 微 is defined as 'to walk secretly'. It is comprised of *chi* 彳 (small step) with *wei* 微 (subtle, small) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 叢訓眇。微从彳，訓隱行。叢借通用微而叢不行。⁸⁷²

Wei 叢 denotes 'subtle'. *Wei* 微, with the classifier 彳 (small step), denotes 'to walk secretly'. 微 has been commonly borrowed for 叢, while 叢 is no longer in use.

Shuowen: 聯，連也。⁸⁷³

Lian 聯 is defined as 'to connect'.

Note: The character *mian* 緜 /*mjæn/ has the same initial consonant /*m-/ as *wei* 微 /*mjæd/ and the same rhyme /*-an/ as *lian* 聯 /*ljæn/. Moreover, 緜 also contains the meanings

⁸⁶⁸ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p.390.

⁸⁶⁹ Duan Yucan, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 633.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 640.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid, p. 649.

⁸⁷² Ibid, p. 77.

⁸⁷³ Ibid, p. 597.

of 聯 (to connect) and 微 (微, subtle).

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
<i>wei</i> 微 (微)	/*mjəd/	微 and 緜 have the same initial consonant /*m-/	subtle
<i>mian</i> 緜	/*mjian/		subtly connected
<i>lian</i> 聯	/*ljan/	聯 and 緜 belong to the same rhyme group of <i>yuan</i> 元 /*-an/	to connect

Table 14

5.2.4 Word Gloss Using Two Glossing Words One of Which Is Related in Sound and Meaning to the Glossed Word

In the *Shuowen*, some word glosses utilise two glossing words, with one exhibiting both phonetic and semantic resonance with the glossed word. Duan astutely identified the glossing word that may have a potential etymological connection with the glossed word and delineated the phonetic relationship between them. The following are some of the examples.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 徃, 急行也。

Ji 徃 denotes ‘to walk or to go with haste (*ji* 急)’.

Duanzhu: 急、徃疊韻。⁸⁷⁴

急 and 徃 are rhymed syllables.

Note: The *fanqie* spelling of the characters 徃 /*kjəp/ and 急 /*kjəp/ are both *juli* 居立, indicating their homonymy. They are not only rhymed but also alliterative syllables. Therefore, Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. 徃 means to go with haste. The original meaning of 急 is anxious. It is extended to denote ‘in a hurry’ and ‘quick’.⁸⁷⁵ 徃 and 急 share the common sense of ‘haste’.

Example 2:

⁸⁷⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 77.


⁸⁷⁵ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 936.

Shuowen: 片，判木也。

Pian 片 signifies ‘a chipped (*pan* 判) wood’.

Duanzhu: 片、判以疊韻爲訓，判者，分也。⁸⁷⁶

片 is interpreted through a rhymed syllable ‘*pan* 判’ which denotes ‘to divide’.

Note: The characters 片 /**phianh*/ and 判 /**phanh*/ are not only rhymed syllables belonging to the same rhyme group of *yuan* 元 /**-an*/, but also share the same initial consonant /**ph-*/. Thus, Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. The oracle bone inscription of 片 is written as , depicting a chipped wood.⁸⁷⁷ 判 means ‘to divide’.⁸⁷⁸ Both Wang Li and Schuessler classify 片 and 判 as cognate words related to the sense of ‘half’.⁸⁷⁹ Therefore, 片 and 判 are related to each other in both sound and meaning.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 祈，求福也。

Qi 祈 denotes ‘to pray (*qiu* 求) for blessings’.

Duanzhu: 祈、求雙聲。⁸⁸⁰

祈 and 求 are alliterative syllables.

Note: The characters 祈 /**gjəd*/ and 求 /**gjəgw*/ share the same initial consonant /**g-*/, medial /**-j-*/, and main vowel /**-ə*/. In the preface to the *Book of Poetry*, ‘Reverent Lord Cheng’, under the sentence ‘*chunxia qidao yu shangdi ye* 春夏祈穀於上帝也’ (In spring and summer, people pray for a good harvest from the Lord), Zheng Xuan noted that ‘祈 means to pray for blessings (求).⁸⁸¹ Therefore, 祈 and 求 are semantically related to the meaning of ‘asking or praying’.

Example 4:

⁸⁷⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 321.

⁸⁷⁷ Yin Liyun, *Hanzi ziyuan xitong yanjiu*, p. 247.

⁸⁷⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 183.

⁸⁷⁹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 552. Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 156.

⁸⁸⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 6.

⁸⁸¹ *Maoshi zhengyi*, p. 1548.

Shuowen: 欣，笑喜也。

Xin 欣 denotes ‘laughing for joy’.

Duanzhu: 言部「訢」下曰：「喜也」。義略同。⁸⁸²

The character *xin* 訢, with the classifier *yan* 言 (words, speech), is explained as ‘delighted’ (喜). They (欣 and 訢) have similar meanings.

Note: The characters 欣 /*hjən/ and 訢 /*hjən/ are homonyms with the same initial consonant /*h-/ and similar finals as 喜 /*hjəgx/. In the *Shuowen*, 喜 is explained as ‘happy’.⁸⁸³ In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, 欣, 訢, and 喜 are considered cognate words related to the sense of ‘delighted or happy’.⁸⁸⁴ Therefore, 欣, 訢, and 喜 are related to one another in both sound and meaning.

5.2.5 Word Gloss Using More Than Two Glossing Words One of Which Is Related in Sound and Meaning to the Glossed Word

In the *Shuowen*, some word glosses utilise more than two glossing words, with one demonstrating both phonetic and semantic affinity with the glossed word. The following are some of the examples.


Example 1:

Shuowen: 吏，治人者也。

Li 吏 means the person who administers (*zhi* 治) others.

Duanzhu: 治與吏同在第一部。此亦以同部疊韻為訓也。⁸⁸⁵

吏 and 治 both belong to the first rhyme group (*zhi* 之) (in Duan’s phonological system of Old Chinese). Thus, 吏 is interpreted through a rhymed syllable (治).

Note: The characters 吏 /*ljəgh/ and 治 /*drjəgh/ are rhymed syllables belonging to the same rhyme group of *zhi* 之 /*-əg/. The oracle bone inscription of 吏 is written as ,

⁸⁸² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 415.

⁸⁸³ Ibid, p. 207.

⁸⁸⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 115.

⁸⁸⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 319.

depicting an official holding something to settle affairs.⁸⁸⁶ The original meaning of 治 is the name of a stream of water. Both *Yupian* and *Guangyun* explain 治 as ‘to manage or to settle’. 治 is extended to denote ‘to govern or to administer’.⁸⁸⁷ Ancient texts, such as *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Classified Collection of Literary and Artistic Works) and Kong Yingda’s annotations to *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, note that 吏 denotes ‘to administer’ (治).⁸⁸⁸ Therefore, 吏 and 治 share the common sense of ‘managing or administering’.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 譚，彖功德以求福。

Lei 譚 denotes ‘to accumulate (*lei* 彖) merits to pray for good fortune’.

Duanzhu: 譚、彖雙聲。⁸⁸⁹

譚 and 彖 are alliterative syllables.

Note: As the *fanqie* spelling of 譚 /*ljədx/ and 彖 /*ljədx/ are both *ligui* 力軌, the two characters are homonyms. They are not only alliterative but also rhymed syllables. Thus, Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct. In the *Shuowen*, 彖 is explained as ‘to add’. Duan annotated that ‘to add means to accumulate’.⁸⁹⁰ 譚 and 彖 are both related to the sense of ‘accumulating’.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 瀕，水涯，人所賓附也，輦戚不葑而止。

Bin 瀕 refers to the margin of water which people approach (*bin* 賓), causing them to frown and not to go further.

Duanzhu: 瀕賓以疊韻爲訓。瀕，今字作濱。⁸⁹¹

瀕 is interpreted through a rhymed syllable ‘*bin* 賓’ (to approach). 瀕 is written as *bin* 濱 (margin of a sea or a river) in current use.

⁸⁸⁶ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 2.


⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 971.

⁸⁸⁸ *Guxun huizuan*, p. 321.

⁸⁸⁹ Duan Yucan, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 101.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 744.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 573.

Note: As the *fanqie* spelling of 瀕 /*pjin/ and 賓 /*pjin/ are both *bilin* 必鄰, the two characters are homonyms. They are not only rhymed but also alliterative syllables. Thus, Duan's phonetic analysis was partly correct. The oracle bone inscription of 賓 is written as , depicting a guest coming to the house.⁸⁹² 賓 can be borrowed for *bin* 濱 (margin of a sea or a river) in ancient texts.⁸⁹³ Therefore, 瀕 (the margin of water) is semantically related to 賓 when 賓 is used to represent the meaning of 'margin of river' (濱). In Wang Li's *Tongyuan zidian*, 瀕 and *bin* 濱 are considered cognate words related to the sense of 'river bank'.⁸⁹⁴

Example 4:

Shuowen: 朔，月一日始蘇也。

Shuo 朔 denotes 'the first day of the lunar month when the moon begins to recover (*su* 蘇) [from its obscurity]'.

Duanzhu: 朔、蘇疊韻。日部曰：晦者，月盡也。盡而蘇矣。《樂記》注曰：「更息曰蘇。」息，止也，生也，止而生矣。引伸爲凡始之稱。⁸⁹⁵

朔 and 蘇 are rhymed syllables. The character *hui* 晦 (last day of the lunar month), with the classifier *ri* 日 (sun), signifies the moon's waning phase reaching its maximum, indicating that the moon is about to recover. The annotation to the *Book of Rites*, 'Record of Music' states: '蘇 denotes "to revitalise" (更息)'. 息 means 'to rest or to cease'. It also means 'to grow', indicating resting and building up the strength to grow. 朔 has an extended meaning of 'beginning'.

Note: The characters 朔 /*srak/ and 蘇 /*sag/ have the same initial consonant, which is dental sibilant /*s-/, and belong to the same rhyme group of *yu* 魚 /*-ak/, /*-ag/. 朔 and 蘇 are near homonyms. Duan's phonetic analysis was partly correct. The original meaning of 蘇 is perilla, a kind of plant. It also means 'to revitalise'.⁸⁹⁶ *Guangya* employs 蘇 (to revitalise) to elucidate the meaning of 朔. In his *Guangya shuzheng*, Wang Niansun utilised commentaries

⁸⁹² Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 572.

⁸⁹³ Editorial Committee, *Hanyu dazidian*, p. 3884.

⁸⁹⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 572.

⁸⁹⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 316.

⁸⁹⁶ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 31.

on the *Analects* and the *Book of Documents* to demonstrate the semantic link between 朔 and 蘇.⁸⁹⁷ Therefore, 朔 and 蘇 are near homonyms and related to the sense of ‘reviving’.

Example 5:

Shuowen: 黍，禾屬而黏者也。以大暑而種，故謂之黍。

Shu 黍 denotes a kind of glutinous millet. It is planted during the Great Heat (*dashu* 大暑) period;⁸⁹⁸ thus, it is called *shu* 黍.

Duanzhu: 以疊韻訓釋。⁸⁹⁹

黍 is interpreted through the rhymed syllable (暑).

Note: 黍 /*hrjagx/ and 暑 /*sthjagx/ belong to the same rhyme group of *yu* 魚 /*-ag/. 暑 means ‘heat or hot’.⁹⁰⁰ *Qimin yaoshu* 齊民要術 (Essential Agricultural Techniques for People) notes that ‘黍 indicates “heat” (暑). The planter must wait for the Great Heat period to plant it.’⁹⁰¹ Therefore, 黍 and 暑 are related to the sense of ‘heat’.

Example 6:

Shuowen: 刮，刮去惡創肉也。

Gua 刮 denotes ‘to scrape (*gua* 刮) away the sore flesh’.

Duanzhu: 刮、刮爲疊韻。⁹⁰²

刮 and 刮 are rhymed syllables.

Note: The characters 刮 /*kwrit/ and 刮 /*kwrat/ have different main vowels and belong to different rhyme groups which are *zhi* 脂 /*-it/ and *ji* 祭 /*-at/ respectively. Therefore, they are not rhymed syllables. Duan’s phonetic analysis was incorrect. However, 刮 /*kwrit/ and 刮 /*kwrat/ share the same initial consonant /*kw-/, the same medial /*-r-/, and the same coda

⁸⁹⁷ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 385.

⁸⁹⁸ Great Heat (*dashu* 大暑) is the last node of Summer in the Chinese calendar, which is often divided into 24 seasonal nodes (*jieqi* 節氣).

⁸⁹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 332.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁹⁰¹ Jia Sixie 賈思勰 (488–556), *Qimin yaoshu* 齊民要術 [Essential Agricultural Techniques for People], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 730, p. 19.

⁹⁰² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 182.

/*-t/. 刮 and 刮 are near homonyms. In the *Shuowen*, 刮 is also explained as ‘to scrape’.⁹⁰³ 刮 and 刮 are ancient and modern graphs.⁹⁰⁴ They share the common sense of ‘scraping’.

5.2.6 Word Gloss Using the Term ‘to Be Equivalent to’

In the *Shuowen*, Duan noted in his annotation under the character *guan* 裸 (to pour out a libation of wine to irrigate the field when sacrificing) that ‘*guan* 裸 is equivalent to *guan* 灌 (pouring out)... the term “*zhiyan* 之言” (to be equivalent to) suggests that the word gloss is based on the relationship in sound and meaning between the glossed word and the glossing word’ (*Fanyun zhiyan zhe, jie tongqi yinyi yiwei guxun* 凡云之言者，皆通其音義以為詁訓).⁹⁰⁵ The following examples are selected from the *Shuowen*, illustrating instances where Duan employed a homonym or near homonym glossing word to elucidate the glossed word, while suggesting a potential etymological connection between the two.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 莞，艸也，可以作席。

Guan 莞 (tabernaemontanus bulrush) is a kind of grass that can be plaited to make mats.

Duanzhu: 莞之言管也。凡莖中空者曰管。莞蓋即今席子草，細莖，圓而中空。⁹⁰⁶

Guan 莞 is equivalent to ‘*guan* 管’ (tube). A stem with a hollow centre is called a tube. 莞 is a type of grass commonly used for making mats today with slender stems, round and hollow.

Note: The characters 莞 /*gwanx/ and 管 /*kwanx/ are rhymed syllables which belong to the same rhyme group of *yuan* 元 /*-an/. Moreover, they have similar initials which are labiovelars. Thus, 莞 and 管 share a similar pronunciation. In addition, 莞 and 管 share the sense of ‘hollowed centre’. In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, 莞 and 管 are classified as cognate

⁹⁰³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 183.

⁹⁰⁴ *Guxun huizuan*, p. 240.

⁹⁰⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 6.

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 28.

words.⁹⁰⁷ Duan utilised 管 to explain 莞 based on their relations in both sound and meaning.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 汭，水相入兒。从水，从內，內亦聲。

Rui 汭 denotes ‘the confluence of streams’. The character is comprised of *shui* 水 (water) and *nei* 內 (entering). 內 also stands for the sound.

Duanzhu: 汭之言內也。⁹⁰⁸

Rui 汭 is equivalent to ‘*nei* 內’ (entering).

Note: With the same initial consonant /*n-/ and the same coda /*-b/, the characters 汭 /*njabh/ and 內 /*nəbh/ are near homonyms. Ancient glosses, such as Kong Yingda’s annotations to the *Book of Documents* and Du Yu’s notes on *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, also utilise 內 (entering) to explain 汭 (the confluence of streams).⁹⁰⁹ Therefore, 內 not only serves as the phonetic element of 汭, but also contributes to the meaning of 汭.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 磊，眾石也。从三石。

Lei 磊 signifies ‘a heap of rocks’. It consists of three stones.

Duanzhu: 石三為磊，猶人三為眾。磊之言衆也。⁹¹⁰

Three *shi* 石 (stones) form piled-up rocks (*lei* 磊), like three *ren* 人 (persons) forming a crowd (*zhong* 眾). *Lei* 磊 is equivalent to *lei* 衆 (to accumulate).

Note: The characters 磊 /*lɛdx/ and 衆 /*ljɛrx/ have the same initial consonant /*l-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of *wei* 微 /*-əɔ(r)/. They are near homonyms. *Lei* 隤 (to pile up) is the proto-form of *lei* 垒, meaning stacking clay blocks to build a wall.⁹¹¹ The sounds and meanings of both 垒 and 衆 derive from 隤. 磊 and 衆 are semantically related as they both convey the sense of ‘piling up’.

⁹⁰⁷ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 583.

⁹⁰⁸ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 551.

⁹⁰⁹ *Guxun huizuan*, p. 1229.

⁹¹⁰ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 457.

⁹¹¹ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 1264.

The examples provided above illustrate how Duan utilised the glossing words ‘A is equivalent to B’ to suggest that B might contain the etymon of A. This method of sound gloss is applied to elucidate both phonetic and semantic relationships between the glossed words and the glossing words. Duan’s annotations clarify this relationship, highlighting the significance of sound in seeking the source of a word’s meaning and emphasising the semantic connections between homonyms or near homonyms.

In the Six Principles of Character Formation, the relationships between phonetic compound, the mutually explanatory characters, and the loan character are closely tied to sound. Additionally, the interpretations of pictograph, ideograph, and associative compound in the *Shuowen* also depend on sound. In his *Zhongguo shengyunxue tonglun* 中國聲韻學通論 (A General Theory of Chinese Phonology), Lin Yin emphasises this connection:

至於指事、象形、會意三者，雖偏重於形義，然亦不能離聲韻而自立。蓋文字所以延長語言，語言藉聲音以傳播。故字必有音，音必有源，追究其源，或象形象聲，或表德表業，所立雖殊，而依聲則一。⁹¹²

Pictograph, ideograph, and associative compound primarily emphasise the relationship between form and meaning, yet they cannot be divorced from sound. Characters are used to record language. Language spreads through sounds. Therefore, characters must have sounds. Sounds must have sources which may depict form, mimic sound, represent the nature of an object, or convey the characteristics of a thing. Despite these diverse origins, their reliance on sounds remains consistent.

The relationships between sounds and meanings in pictographs, ideographs, and associative compounds are typically conveyed through sound glosses. In a phonetic compound, the phonetic element often encapsulates the etymon of the entire character. Mutually explanatory characters (*zhuanzhu* 轉注) refer to homonyms or near homonyms that elucidate each other’s meanings.⁹¹³ Loan characters are based on sound identification.

⁹¹² Lin Yin, *Zhongguo shengyunxue tonglun*, p. 3.

⁹¹³ Characters were created neither by a single person, in a certain period of time, nor at a certain place. Thus, some characters were created at different places and during different periods of time, but they share a similar meaning. The function of mutually explanatory characters (*zhuanzhu* 轉注) is to

Therefore, all of the Six Principles of Character Formation are linked to sound. As remarked by Galambos, ‘Although Chinese writing is ideographic, it does not deviate from the fact that a true writing is a graphic representation of language, which by definition is inseparable from pronunciation.’⁹¹⁴

5.3 Explaining a Character through Both the Phonetic Element and the Sound

5.3.1 Distinguishing Synonymous Characters by Virtue of the Phonetic Element


As the phonetic element has a source-indicating feature, it helps to understand the meaning of the phonetic compound. Dai Tong proposed that it was effective to apply the deduction method to understand the meaning of a character. For example, *hun* 昏 denoting ‘dusk’ indicates the dimming of sunlight. 昏 is also used to denote ‘confused in mind’ and ‘dullness of vision’ when combined with the classifiers *xin* 心 (heart-mind) and *mu* 目 (eye), respectively. In ancient times, weddings were conducted at dusk. Thus, by adding the classifier *nü* 女 (woman) to 昏, the phonetic compound *hun* 婚 was formed to denote ‘weddings’.⁹¹⁵ Dai’s deduction underscores the source-indicating feature of the phonetic element and illustrates the derivational connection between the phonetic element and the phonetic compounds. Moreover, the phonetic element aids in distinguishing the nuances between synonyms.

Example 1: The synonymous characters *xin* 馨 and *xiang* 香, both conveying the idea of ‘fragrance’, exhibit a nuanced difference highlighted by the phonetic element *qing* 靛 of 馨.

communicate the different characters with the same meaning that were created at different times and places. See Lin Yin, *Wenzixue gaishuo*, p. 157.

⁹¹⁴ Imre Galambos, ‘The Chinese Writing system’, *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature*, eds. Wiebke Denecke, Li Wai-ye, and Tian Xiaofei (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 31.

⁹¹⁵ Dai Tong, *Liushu gu*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 226, p. 8.

磬 is the ancient script of the character *qing* 磬,⁹¹⁶ representing a musical stone whose sound carries over a distance. Given that the phonetic element often indicates the source, it suggests that the distinction between 馨 and 香 lies in that the scent signified by 馨 can be smelled from a distance. It is implied by interpretation in the *Shuowen* that 馨 denotes a ‘far-spreading fragrance’.⁹¹⁷ Zhao Cheng 趙誠 notes that the oracle bone inscription of 聲  (sound) is used for 馨.⁹¹⁸ It can be inferred that 馨 has the same characteristic as sound, which can be sensed from a distance.

Example 2: The characters *dun* 遁 and *tao* 逃 are both associated with the idea of ‘fleeing’. The phonetic element 盾 (shield) of 遁 suggests being protected by hiding behind it, thus relating 遁 to the notion of ‘hiding’ as well. In *Guangyun*, 遁 is explained as ‘to flee, to hide, or to leave’.⁹¹⁹ This explanation finds support in the sentence ‘*hu dahai yuandun, yiwei qie shiji ye...bi linjian kuizhi* 虎大駭遠遁，以為且噬己也……蔽林間窺之’ (Being terrified, the tiger flees far away and hides, as he thinks that [the donkey] might eat him……He hides in the forest and observes) from the article ‘The Donkey from Qian’ written by Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819).⁹²⁰ It can be inferred that 遁 carries the sense of ‘hiding’ in addition to ‘fleeing’, distinguishing it from 逃. Wang Li, in his *Guhanyu zidian* 古漢語字典 (Dictionary of Ancient Chinese), references commentaries on ancient texts, such as the *Book of Changes* and *Songs of Chu*, demonstrating that 遁 carries the sense of ‘hiding’.⁹²¹

Example 3: The characters *gong* 供 and *ji* 給 both convey the notion of ‘providing’, with their distinction lying in their phonetic elements. *Gong* 共, serving as the phonetic element of

⁹¹⁶ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 456.


⁹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 333.

⁹¹⁸ Zhao Cheng, *Jiagu wenzixue gangyao*, p. 196.

⁹¹⁹ Chen Pengnian, *Xinjiao songben guangyun*, p. 399.

⁹²⁰ Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), *Liuhedong ji* 柳河東集 [The Collected Works of Liu Hedong], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 1076, p. 186.

⁹²¹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 543.

供, is written as  in the oracle bone inscription.⁹²² It depicts the gesture of joining hands and denotes ‘to offer respectfully’. Hence 供 indicates ‘to present with respect’ or ‘to offer in worship’. On the other hand, the character 給 is defined as ‘being well provided for’ in the *Shuowen*. Duan’s annotation indicates that 給 is formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions.⁹²³ *He* 合, serving as the phonetic element of 給, denotes ‘whole or entire’. Thus, it can be inferred that 給 indicates ‘being sufficiently provided’. In the commentaries of ancient texts, such as *Mencius* and *Zhuangzi*, 給 is glossed as ‘sufficient’.⁹²⁴

Example 4: Both *yan* 言 and *yu* 語 denotes ‘to say’. There is a subtle difference between the two synonyms.

Shuowen: 語, 論也。从言, 吾聲。⁹²⁵

Yu 語 means ‘to discourse’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *wu* 吾 as the phonetic.

Shuowen: 吾: 我自稱也。从口, 五聲。⁹²⁶

Wu 吾 is an impersonal pronoun that denotes ‘oneself’. It is comprised of *kou* 口 (mouth) with *wu* 五 as the phonetic.

Shuowen: 五: 从二, 陰陽在天地間交午也。⁹²⁷

Wu 五 (five) follows two (symbolising heaven and earth), representing the interplay of Yin and Yang between heaven and earth..

According to the *Shuowen*, the character 五, serving as the phonetic element of 吾, is linked with the concept of ‘contacting or countering’. Characters containing the phonetic element ‘*wu* 吾’ often convey the notion of ‘going against’, exemplified by *wu* 扞 (to resist) and *wu* 悞 (to defiant). As the notion of ‘countering’ suggests a confrontation between two

⁹²² Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen zidian*, p. 236.

⁹²³ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 654.

⁹²⁴ *Guxun huizuan*, p. 1735.

⁹²⁵ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 90.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 57.

⁹²⁷ *Ibid*.

sides, wherein 語 is associated with the idea of ‘interaction’. In Warring States scripts, 語 is written as 𠄎, indicating the contribution of 五 to the source of the word.⁹²⁸ Additionally, 語 and 許 are used interchangeably in the Chu scripts.⁹²⁹ Both of the phonetic elements, 吾 /*ngag/ and 午 /*ngagx/ (to offend), indicate the connotations of ‘countering or interacting’.

Hence, it can be inferred that 語 signifies the discourse between two individuals, whereas 言 denotes spontaneous speech without being asked. For instance, 唁 言 signifies the act of offering condolences, indicating the initiative to express sympathy to those who have experienced the loss of relatives. The distinction between 言 and 語 is elucidated in the *Shuowen*, which states that ‘言 refers to individual speech without prompt, while 語 denotes dialogue or conversation between two individuals.’⁹³⁰ This distinction is reflected in the *Analects*, which says, ‘*Shi buyu, qin buyan* 食不語, 寢不言’⁹³¹ (When dining, the Master did not talk with others. When in bed, he did not speak).⁹³²

Example 5: In a broad sense, both *dao* 道 and *tu* 途 denote ‘a way or a path’. However, a subtle distinction exists between them.

Shuowen: 道, 所行道也。从辵首。

Dao 道 denotes ‘the way to walk on’. It is comprised of *chuo* 辵 (to walk) and *shou* 首 (a head).

Duanzhu: 首者, 行所達也, 首亦聲。⁹³³

Shou 首 means ‘walking towards’. 首 also stands for the sound.

Note: 首 is related to the notion of direction. Thus, 道 indicates a path with a specific direction and destination. Duan provided the following annotation under the character *dao* 導

⁹²⁸ He Linyi, *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 505.

⁹²⁹ Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, p. 104.

⁹³⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 90.

⁹³¹ Liu Baonan, *Lunyu zhengyi*, p. 1131.

⁹³² Wu Guozhen, *A New Annotated English Version of the Analects of Confucius*, p. 259.

⁹³³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 76.

(to lead), observing that ‘道 is often used for 導 due to their semantic connection.’⁹³⁴ Zhao Keqin notes that 道 is the original character for 導, meaning ‘to guide or to lead’. 導 is a later derivative.⁹³⁵ In the Chu scripts, 道 is used for 導.⁹³⁶ The character 導 (to guide), with 道 as its phonetic element, conveys the notion of ‘leading’. Thus, it can be inferred that 道 signifies ‘the path that leads to somewhere’. Due to its association with the meanings of ‘directions’ and ‘goals’, 道 is extended to denote a kind of thought or principle. Hence, ‘*fuzi zhidao* 夫子之道’ means ‘the Way of Confucius’. However, the meaning of the character 途 does not inherently signify the notion of direction.



Example 6:

Shuowen: 鬻，獻也。从高省，日象進孰物形。《孝經》曰：「祭則鬼鬻之。」⁹³⁷

Xiang 鬻 denotes ‘to present sacrificial offerings’. The component 日 depicts the cooked food for sacrificial offerings. The *Book of Filiality* states: (The parents) as spirits after death took pleasure in the sacrificial offerings (鬻) made to them.⁹³⁸

Shuowen: 饗，鄉人飲酒也。从鄉，从食，鄉亦聲。⁹³⁹

Xiang 饗 denotes ‘hosting a banquet among villagers’. The character is comprised of *xiang* 鄉 (village, villager) and *shi* 食 (food); 鄉 also stands for the sound.

Note: 鬻 /*hjangx/ and 饗 /*hjangx/ are homonyms, both associated with the concept of ‘enjoying food’. In the oracle bone inscriptions, 饗 (hosting a banquet), 鄉 (a village, villagers), and 卿 (you) share the same graphic form , originally representing two people facing each other with the food positioned between them.⁹⁴⁰ The oracle bone inscription for 鬻 is written as , considered to signify ‘presenting sacrificial offerings’.⁹⁴¹ It can be inferred from the phonetic element *xiang* 鄉 that the phonetic compound 饗 refers to the food for

⁹³⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 122.

⁹³⁵ Zhao Keqin, *Gudai hanyu cihuixue*, p. 274.

⁹³⁶ Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, p. 46.

⁹³⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 231.

⁹³⁸ *The Chinese Classics of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing*, trans. Henry Rosemont, Jr. and Roger T. Ames (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), p. 109.

⁹³⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 223.

⁹⁴⁰ Zhao Cheng, *Jiagu wenzixue gangyao*, p. 55.

⁹⁴¹ Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen zidian*, p. 601.

people (villagers), whereas 膏 pertains to the food for spirits.

Example 7: Both *xian* 趯 and *qian* 蹇 are under the classifier *zou* 走 (to walk) and are associated with the sense of ‘walking’. The difference between them lies in their phonetic elements.

Shuowen: 趯, 急走也, 从走, 弦聲。

Xian 趯 denotes ‘walking in haste’. It is comprised of *zou* 走 (to walk) with *xian* 弦 (strings) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 形聲包會意。从弦, 有急義也。⁹⁴²

The character 趯 is formed through the principles of both shaping sound and combining intentions. The component *xian* 弦 (string) is related to ‘haste or urgent’.

Shuowen: 蹇, 走兒。从走, 蹇省聲。⁹⁴³

Qian 蹇 signifies ‘the appearance of walking’. It is comprised of *zou* 走 (to walk) with *jian* 蹇 (lame) as an abbreviated phonetic element.

Note: The phonetic element of 趯 is *xian* 弦. Duan provided the following annotation under the character *xian* 弦 (string), noting that ‘弦 is associated with the notion of “urgency”.’⁹⁴⁴ It can be inferred that 趯 is also related to the notion of ‘urgency’, as suggested by the explanation of ‘walking in haste’ in the *Shuowen*. The phonetic element of 蹇 is *jian* 蹇, meaning ‘lame’. It can be inferred that 蹇 is linked to ‘being crippled’. Xu Hao commented in his *Sub-commentary on the Duanzhu* that ‘蹇 shares a similar sound and meaning with 蹇, denoting “clumsy steps”.’⁹⁴⁵ *Ziyuan* also notes that 蹇 is equivalent to 蹇, signifying being lame or crippled.⁹⁴⁶

Example 8: Both *tan* 醴 and *dan* 醢 are classified under the classifier *you* 酉 (wine vessel) and are associated with ‘wine’. The difference between them lies in their phonetic elements.

⁹⁴² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 64.

⁹⁴³ Ibid, p. 65.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 648.

⁹⁴⁵ Xu Hao, *Shuowen jiezi zhujian*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 225, p. 248.

⁹⁴⁶ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 104.

Tan 覃, serving as the phonetic element of *tan* 醞, carries the sense of ‘profound or deep’.⁹⁴⁷ The phonetic compounds derived from 覃 often relate to ‘deep’.⁹⁴⁸

For example:

Shuowen: 潭, 含深也。从口, 覃聲。⁹⁴⁹

Dan 潭 means ‘to take far into the mouth’. It is comprised of *kou* 口 (mouth) with *tan* 覃 as the phonetic.

Shuowen: 潭, 潭水。从水, 覃聲。⁹⁵⁰

Tan 潭 is the name of a river. It is comprised of *shui* 水 (water) with *tan* 覃 as the phonetic.

Note: An extended meaning of 潭 is ‘deep water’. Both 潭 and 覃 denote ‘deep’.⁹⁵¹

Shuowen: 瞻, 深視也。从目, 覃聲。⁹⁵²

Tan 瞻 means ‘to look deeply’. It is comprised of *mu* 目 (eye) with *tan* 覃 as the phonetic.

Note: From the above phonetic compounds, it can be inferred that 醞 denotes ‘full-flavoured wine’. Thus, in the *Shuowen*, *tan* 醞 is explained as ‘rich taste of wine’, comprised of *you* 酉 (wine vessel) with *tan* 覃 as the phonetic.⁹⁵³

As for 耽, it is cognate with *dan* 耽 and *dan* 媿, both of which are related to the sense of ‘joy or pleasure’.⁹⁵⁴

Shuowen: 耽, 耳大垂也。从耳, 兪聲。

Dan 耽 denotes ‘large pendant ears’. It is comprised of *er* 耳 (ear) with *dan* 兪 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《毛傳》曰:「耽, 樂也。」耽本不訓樂, 而可段為「媿」字。女部曰:「媿者, 樂也。」⁹⁵⁵

Mao's Commentary of Poetry states that 耽 denotes ‘joy’. The original meaning of 耽 is not joy, but it can be borrowed for *dan* 媿. 媿, with the classifier *nü* 女 (woman),

⁹⁴⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 232.

⁹⁴⁸ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 3, p. 1482.

⁹⁴⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 59.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 535.

⁹⁵¹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 650.

⁹⁵² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 135.

⁹⁵³ Ibid, p. 755.

⁹⁵⁴ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 644.

⁹⁵⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 597.

signifies ‘pleasure’.

Shuowen: 酖，樂酒也。从酉，允聲。

Dan 酖 denotes ‘the pleasure of [drinking] wine’. It is comprised of *you* 酉 (wine vessel) with *dan* 允 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 樂酒者，所樂在酒。⁹⁵⁶

The pleasure of drinking wine indicates that the enjoyment arises from [drinking] wine.

Note: Therefore, 醇 denotes ‘full-flavoured wine’, while 酖 denotes ‘the pleasure of drinking wine’.

Example 9: Both *nie* 齧 and *yao* 咬 are related to the notion of ‘biting’. The difference between them is embedded in their phonetic elements. *Qi* 切, serving as the phonetic element of 齧, means ‘to engrave’. Thus, 齧 indicates biting with force. Duan offered the following annotation under the character 齧, noting that ‘*Shiming* states that the bird eating is called “to peck” (*zhuo* 啄), while the beast eating is called “to gnaw” (*nie* 齧).’⁹⁵⁷ The teeth of the beasts such as the tiger and the lion are sharp, and thus the force of their bite is strong, akin to engraving things with a knife. However, the character 咬 does not inherently express the notion of ‘force’.

From the above examples, we can observe that phonetic elements aid in precisely distinguishing synonymous characters and discerning subtle differences in their meanings.

5.3.2 Differentiating Sounds and Meanings of a Polyphonic Character

As characters were created neither at the same place nor by the same people, a character might be polyphonic and bears different meanings. Huang Kan once proposed that the phonetic element may be polyphonic, which explains the reason why some phonetic

⁹⁵⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 756.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 80.

compounds have phonetic elements with completely different pronunciations.⁹⁵⁸ For a polyphonic character, different meanings are conveyed through different sounds, though the graphic form remains the same. Sound can help us differentiate the meanings of a polyphonic character.

For example, 己 is a polyphonic character. The phonetic compounds *ji* 改, *ji* 紀, *fei* 妃, and *fei* 配 with 己 as their phonetic element can be categorised into two groups according to different sounds. As sound is often linked to meaning, these two groups of phonetic compounds generally represent two categories of meanings although they share the same graphic form of the phonetic element 己.

Group A:

Shuowen: 改，女字也。从女，己聲。⁹⁵⁹

Ji 改 means ‘the courtesy name of a woman’. It is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) with 己 as the phonetic.

Note: *Ji* 改 is used to differentiate oneself from others.

Shuowen: 紀，絲別也。从糸，己聲。⁹⁶⁰

Ji 紀 means ‘leading thread’. It is comprised of *mi* 糸 (silk) with 己 as the phonetic.

Note: *Ji* 紀 is used to differentiate one wisp of thread from other threads.

Shuowen: 記，疏也。从言，己聲。⁹⁶¹

Ji 記 denotes ‘to record’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with 己 as the phonetic.

Note: *Ji* 記 means to mark. It is related to the notion of differentiation as well.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Shared meaning
<i>ji</i> 改	/*kjəgx/	homonyms	to differentiate
<i>ji</i> 紀			
<i>ji</i> 記	/*kjəgh/		

Table 15

⁹⁵⁸ Huang Zhuo, *Huang Kan wenzi shengyun xungu biji*, p.52.

⁹⁵⁹ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 623.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 651.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 95.

As we can see from Table 15 above, the characters in this group are homonyms in Old Chinese. They are all related to the notion of ‘differentiating’. In both Schuessler’s and Yin Jiming’s dictionaries, 記 and 紀 are classified as cognate words that have the meaning of ‘differentiating’.⁹⁶²

Group B:

Shuowen: 配，酒色也。从酉，己聲。

Pei 配 means ‘wine colour’. It is comprised of *you* 酉 (wine vessel) with 己 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 己非聲也。當本是妃省聲，故段爲妃字。⁹⁶³

The phonetic element of 配 is not 己 but 妃 which serves as an abbreviated phonetic element. Thus, 配 can be borrowed for 妃.

Note: 配 refers to the process of blending sake with sake lees to produce wines of different colours that are matched with different types of wine. The extended meaning of 配 is ‘to match’. The current use of 配 signifies ‘spouse’.

Shuowen: 妃，匹也。从女，己聲。

Fei 妃 (concubine) denotes ‘spouse’. It is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) with 己 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此會意字。⁹⁶⁴

It is an associative compound.

Note: 配 and 妃 are homonyms and denote ‘to match or to mate’. In both Wang Li’s and Yin Jiming’s dictionaries, 配 and 妃 are considered cognate words that share the meaning of ‘matching’.⁹⁶⁵

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Shared meaning
<i>pei</i> 配	/*phədh/	homonyms	to match
<i>fei</i> 妃	/*phədh/		

Table 16

⁹⁶² Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 298. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 103.


⁹⁶³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 755.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 620.

⁹⁶⁵ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 448. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 1, p. 104.

Although the phonetic elements of the above two groups of phonetic compounds share the same graphic form 己, they represent different meanings due to their different pronunciations. However, we can see from the *Duanzhu* under the characters *pei* 配 and *fei* 妃 that Duan was not aware of the fact that 己 might be polyphonic. He mistook 妃 for an associative compound as well as an abbreviated phonetic element of 配. It could be suggested that 己 originally had two pronunciations. Later, the pronunciation in group B was seldom used, but the trace of the pronunciation is preserved in the phonetic compounds *pei* 配 and *fei* 妃. Therefore, the pronunciation (/ *phədh/) of 配 and 妃 does not match that of *ji* 己 / *kjəgx/, which is still in use today.

In another example, in the *Shuowen*, Duan offered the following annotation under the character 而, noting that ‘it can serve as a function word when being placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. Namely, it can be interpreted as *ran* 然 (but), *ru* 如 (if), *ru* 汝 (you), or *neng* 能 (can). As 而 and 能 are homonyms in Old Chinese, 而 can be borrowed for 能.’⁹⁶⁶ 而 / *njəg/ and 能 / *nəng/ have the same initial consonant / *n-/ and main vowel / *-ə/, but different codas. Thus, they are near homonyms in Old Chinese. Table 17 below shows the phonetic relationship between 而 and the characters that 而 can be used for.

There is another character *xu* 需 (to await or need) which has 而 serving as its phonetic element.⁹⁶⁷ This indicates that 而 might have another pronunciation which is similar to 需 / *snjug/. In the *Shuowen*, 而 is defined as *xu* 須 / *sjug/, meaning ‘the bristles on the face’. The oracle bone inscription of 而 is written as , which is a pictograph depicting the shape of the beard.⁹⁶⁸ The character 須 / *sjug/ has the same *fanqie* spelling as 需 / *snjug/.⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 458.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 580.

⁹⁶⁸ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 4, p. 3443.

⁹⁶⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 428.

Thereby, it could be said that 須 (the bristles on the face) and 而 (the phonetic element of 需) share the same pronunciation /*sjug/ and are both related to the notion of ‘beard’.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning conveyed by 而
<i>er</i> 而	/*njəg/	而, 能, 然, 如, and 汝 have the same initial consonant /*n-/	used for other words, such as 能 (can), 然 (but), 如 (if), and 汝 (you)
<i>neng</i> 能	/*nəng/		
<i>ran</i> 然	/*njan/		
<i>ru</i> 如	/*njag/		
<i>ru</i> 汝	/*njagx/		
<i>xu</i> 而	/*sjug/	near homonyms (with similar initial consonants and the same final)	beard, bristles
<i>xu</i> 須	/*snjug/		而 only denotes the sound in 需 (to await, need)
<i>xu</i> 需			

Table 17

In conclusion, it could be suggested that 而 had two pronunciations in ancient times as shown in Table 17 above. One is used as a function word with the initial /*n-/ and belongs to the rhyme group of *zhi* 之 /*-əg/. The other stands for the beard with the initial /*s-/ and belongs to the rhyme group of *hou* 侯 /*-ug/.

In addition, the Middle Chinese tradition tells us that a given Chinese character may change its meaning when its pronunciation is altered slightly.⁹⁷⁰ As time goes by, some words differentiate into different sounds and meanings, which are subtly different.

For instance:

Shuowen: 教, 覺悟也。从教冂, 冂, 尙矇也, 臼聲。學, 篆文教省。

Xue 教 denotes ‘awakening’ (*jue* 覺). It is comprised of *jiao* 教 (to instruct) and *mi* 冂 (to cover) signifying ‘being covered’, with *ju* 臼 (to grasp with both hands) as the phonetic. 學 is the abbreviated form of 教.

Duanzhu: 《學記》曰：「學然後知不足，知不足然後能自反也。」按，知不足所謂覺悟也。《記》又曰：「教然後知困，知困然後能自強也，故曰教學相長也。」

⁹⁷⁰ David Prager Branner, ‘On Early Chinese Morphology and its Intellectual History’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* vol. 13, 1 (2003): 45.

《兌命》曰：「學學半。其此之謂乎！」按，《兌命》上學字謂教，言教人乃益己之學半。教人謂之學者，學所以自覺，下之效也；教人所以覺人，上之施也。故古統謂之學也。詳古之製字，作「教」从「教」，主於覺人。秦以來去「文」作「學」，主於自覺。《學記》之文，學、教分列，似與《兌命》統名為學者殊矣。後人分別「教」，胡孝反；「學」，胡覺反。⁹⁷¹

The Chapter ‘*Xueji* 學記’ (Record on the Subject of Education) of the *Book of Rites* states: ‘When one learns (*xue* 學), one recognises their own deficiencies. After recognising one’s deficiencies, one is able to examine oneself.’ Knowing one’s deficiencies is a sign of becoming awakened (覺). ‘*Xueji*’ also states: ‘When one teaches, one understands the difficulties of learning. After understanding one’s difficulties, one is able to stimulate oneself to effort. Hence it is said, “Teaching and learning complement each other”.’ Just as it is stated in the *Book of Documents*, ‘The Charge to Yue’ that ‘*xiao* 學 *xue* 學 *ban* 半’ (Teaching is the half of learning).⁹⁷²

Referring to the sentence ‘*xiao xue ban* 學學半’, the first 學 signifies teaching, indicating that teaching others is half of improving one’s own learning. The reason why teaching (*jiao* 教) is also called learning is that teaching helps one to become awakened to be the model for the learners to imitate (*xiao* 效). The reason why teaching is to enlighten (*jue* 覺) others is that the teacher offers instructions. Both teaching and learning were called ‘學’ in ancient times.

As for the intention of character formation, 教 is derived from 教, placing the emphasis on enlightening others. After the Qin dynasty, 教 was replaced by 學 with *pu* 文 (to tap) being removed, emphasising self-awakening (*zijue* 自覺). The characters for 學 and 教 are differentiated in ‘*Xueji*’, while they are collectively referred to as 學 in the *Book of Documents*, ‘The Charge to Yue’. Later, people differentiated the pronunciations of these two characters. Namely, the phonetic spelling of *xiao* 教 is *huxiao* 胡孝, while the phonetic spelling of *xue* 學 is *hujue* 胡覺.

Note: The *Correct Meaning of the Book of Rites* states that in the sentence ‘*xiao xue ban* 學學半’, the former *xiao* 學 meaning ‘to teach’ is pronounced as *xiao* 教; the latter *xue* 學 denotes ‘to practise’ (*xi* 習), namely, learning.⁹⁷³ ‘*Xiao xue ban* 學學半’ is also written as ‘*xiao xue ban* 教學半’ in ancient texts.⁹⁷⁴ Duan’s annotation indicates that *jiao* 教 (to teach) and *xue* 學 (to learn) were both called *xiao* 教 in ancient times. Later, 教 and 學 emphasised

⁹⁷¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 128.




⁹⁷² Internet Sacred Text Archive, the *Book of Rites*, trans. James Legge (1885). Last modified November 2000. Accessed 7 May 2024. <https://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/like2/like216.htm>.

⁹⁷³ *Further Notes on the Book of Rites*, p. 1226.

⁹⁷⁴ Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shangshu jishi* 尚書集釋 [Collected Annotations of the *Book of Documents*] (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2014), p. 318.

enlightening others and self-awakening, respectively. Below are two groups of words derived from 教.

Group A:

The graph *xiao* 教 first appeared in the Western Zhou period. It is written as , comprised of 教 () and 學 ().⁹⁷⁵ As noted by Duan, 教 has 教 (teach) as one of its components, thus placing more emphasis on enlightening others. The following are another two characters related to 教 in both sound and meaning:

Shuowen: 教，上所施，下所效也。从支 孝。

Jiao 教 denotes ‘what the teacher offers as well as what the learner imitates’. It is comprised of *pu* 支 (to slightly beat) and *jiao* 孝 (to imitate).

Duanzhu: 教、效疊韻。孝，效也。⁹⁷⁶

Jiao 教 and *xiao* 效 are rhymed dissyllables. 孝 denotes ‘to imitate’.

Note: From the formation of the character 教, we can infer that the right part 支 symbolises the act of a teacher supervising a student, while the left part 孝 indicates the learner’s imitating. Zhao Cheng suggests that in the oracle bone inscriptions, *xiao* 學 (教) and *jiao* 教 originally shared the same phonetic element 孝 and were homonyms. Later, their pronunciations diverged.⁹⁷⁷ According to the bamboo slips manuscripts from the Guodian Chu tomb, Galambos considers that 教 and 學 (教) are structural variants of the same word.⁹⁷⁸

Shuowen: 效，象也。从支，交聲。⁹⁷⁹

Xiao 效 means ‘to imitate’. It is comprised of *pu* 支 (to slightly beat) with *jiao* 交 (to exchange, to deliver) as the phonetic.

Note: 效 denotes ‘to imitate’. The teacher should act as an exemplary person for the

⁹⁷⁵ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 265.

⁹⁷⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 128.

⁹⁷⁷ Zhao Cheng, *Jiagu wenzixue gangyao*, p. 201.

⁹⁷⁸ Imre Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts* (Budapest: Department of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2006), p.120.

⁹⁷⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 124.

learner to follow. Yin Jiming notes that 教 (to teach the learners to imitate) and 效 are cognate words that are related to the meaning of ‘imitating’.⁹⁸⁰

All the characters in Group A belong to the rhyme *xiao* 效 /-au/ with a departing tone in Middle Chinese. They are related to the notion of ‘enlightening others’.

Characters	Sinographic spelling	Phonetic reconstruction in Middle Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Shared meaning	Tones
<i>xiao</i> 教	<i>huxiao</i> 胡孝 981	/yau/	教 and 效 are homonyms. 教 and 教 have similar initials, ⁹⁸² and are also rhymed syllables which belong to the same rhyme group of <i>xiao</i> 效 /-au/.	to enlighten others	departing tone
<i>jiao</i> 教	<i>guxiao</i> 古孝 983	/kau/			
<i>xiao</i> 效	<i>hujiao</i> 胡教 984	/yau/			

Table 18

Group B:

According to Duan, the character *xue* 學 replaces *xiao* 教 and emphasises self-awakening (*zijue* 自覺). Another character related to *xue* 學, both in sound and meaning, is:

Shuowen: 覺，悟也。从見，學省聲。⁹⁸⁵

Jue 覺 means ‘to awaken’. It is comprised of *jian* 見 (to see) with abbreviated *xue* 學 (to learn) as its phonetic element.

Note: 學 and 覺 are rhymed syllables in Middle Chinese. Both characters belong to the rhyme *jue* 覺 /-âk/ with an entering tone in Middle Chinese and have connections with the meaning of ‘awakening’.⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁸⁰ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 2, p. 714.

⁹⁸¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 128.

⁹⁸² The initial consonant /y-/ is laryngeal sound and /k-/ is velar. They are close to each other.

⁹⁸³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 128.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 124.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 413.

⁹⁸⁶ In Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction of Old Chinese, suffix /*-s/ has a function which is to derive verbs of outwardly directed action out of verbs of inwardly directed action or stative verbs. In this case,

Characters	Sinographic spelling	Phonetic reconstruction in Middle Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Shared meaning	Tones
<i>xue</i> 學	<i>hujue</i> 胡覺 ⁹⁸⁷	/ɣâk/	學 and 覺 have similar initials and are rhymed syllables which belong to the same rhyme <i>jue</i> 覺 /-âk/.	to self-awaken	entering tone
<i>jue</i> 覺	<i>guyue</i> 古岳 ⁹⁸⁸	/kâk/			

Table 19

Another example:

Shuowen: 施，旗旖施也。从旡，也聲。


Yi 施 denotes ‘the waving flag’. It is comprised of *yan* 旡 (the appearance of a flag unfurled) with *ye* 也 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 經傳段此爲𡗗𡗗字。𡗗之形，施之本義俱廢矣。⁹⁸⁹

施 is usually borrowed for ‘*shi* 𡗗’ (to exert, to act) in ancient texts. The form of 𡗗 and the original meaning of 施 are obsoleted.

Note: According to the *Shuowen* and the *Duanzhu*, we can see that in Old Chinese, 施 means ‘the waving flag’ and is also used for 𡗗. It differentiated into two groups of sounds and meanings and became a polyphonic character in Middle Chinese.

Group A:

The bronze inscription of the phonetic radical *ye* 也 /jia/ is written as  which is considered to be equivalent to the character 它 meaning snake.⁹⁹⁰ In the Warring States scripts, the phonetic element of 施 is 它 rather than 也.⁹⁹¹ As a snake is usually wriggling, 施 is associated with the sense of ‘tortuous or winding’. An example can be found in the

the suffix /*-s/ changes the inwardly directed verb *xue* 學 /*m-kʰruk/ (to study, to imitate) into the outwardly directed verb *xiao* 教 /*m-kʰruk-s/ (to teach). Moreover, the suffix /*-s/ is the source of the departing tone of *xiào* 教 in Middle Chinese. See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart’s *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 59.

⁹⁸⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 128.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 413.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 314.

⁹⁹⁰ Li Pu, *Guwenzi gulin*, vol. 9, p. 921.

⁹⁹¹ Tang Yuhui 湯餘惠, *Zhanguo wenzi bian* 戰國文字編 [Compilation of Warring States Scripts] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2001), p. 466.

sentence ‘*shicong liangren zhi suozhi* 施從良人之所之’ (She dogged her husband’s footsteps wherever he went) from *Mencius*.⁹⁹² Zhao Qi 趙歧 (d.201) noted that ‘施 means walking tortuously’.⁹⁹³ In addition, 施 is semantically related to *yi* 迤 (winding) and *yi* 嶷 (winding hill), which have the same phonetic radical 也.

Characters	Sinographic spelling	Phonetic reconstruction in Middle Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Shared meaning	Tones
<i>yi</i> 施	<i>yizhi</i> 以豉 ⁹⁹⁴	/jiě/	homonyms	winding	departing tone
<i>yi</i> 嶷	<i>yi'er</i>	/jiě/			rising tone
<i>yi</i> 迤	移爾 ⁹⁹⁵				

Table 20

As demonstrated in Table 20 above, all the characters in Group A are categorised under the *yi* 以 /∅-/ initial category and belong to the *zhi* 寘 /-ě/ or *zhi* 紙 /-ě/ rhymes in Middle Chinese. They are associated with the notion of ‘winding’.

Group B:

Shi 施 is also defined as ‘to exert or to impose on’ in *Guangyun*.⁹⁹⁶ *Shi* 鎚 is a kind of short spear used for throwing against the enemy to defend oneself.⁹⁹⁷ *Shi* 蒺 denotes cocklebur, a kind of thorny grass that attaches to other objects.⁹⁹⁸ 鎚 and 蒺, being homophonous with 施, are both related to the notion of ‘exerting or imposing on’. As shown in Table 21 below, the characters in Group B are categorised under the *shu* 書 /ś-/ initial category and belong to the *zhi* 支 /-ě/ rhyme with a level tone in Middle Chinese. They are associated with the concept of ‘exerting or imposing on’, implying a borrowed meaning

⁹⁹² *Mencius*, trans. Zhao Zhentao, Zhang Wenting, and Zhou Dingzhi, p. 195.

⁹⁹³ *Mengzi zhushu* 孟子注疏 [Sub-commentaries on Mencius], notes by Zhao Qi 趙歧 (d.201), expanded annotations by Sun Shi 孫奭 (962–1033) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 283.

⁹⁹⁴ Chen Pengnian, *Xinjiao songben guangyun*, p. 347.

⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 244.

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 47.

⁹⁹⁷ Zhang Zilie, *Zhengzitong*, ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu, vol. 235, p. 636.

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 372.

previously conveyed by *shi* 𡗗 /sjě/ (to exert, to impose on).

Characters	Sinographic spelling	Phonetic reconstruction in Middle Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Shared meaning	Tones
<i>shi</i> 施	<i>shizhi</i> 式支 ⁹⁹⁹	/sjě/	homonyms	to exert or to impose on	level tone
<i>shi</i> 鎡					
<i>shi</i> 蒺					

Table 21

5.3.3 Seek the Etymon of a Phonetic Compound by Virtue of the Sound

The meaning conveyed by the phonetic element is not limited by its graphic form. The etymon contained in the phonetic element should be traced through sound, rather than being restricted by graphic form. Liu Shipai once stated: ‘If a phonetic element does not accord with the meaning of the phonetic compound, there must be a homonym from which the meaning of the phonetic compound is derived.’¹⁰⁰⁰ Zhang Taiyan also claimed that the meaning conveyed by the phonetic element should be sought not only through the graphic form, but also through the sound of the phonetic element.¹⁰⁰¹ If a phonetic element has no semantic relations with the phonetic compound, the phonetic element might be a loan character. The proposed orthograph should share the same or similar pronunciation with the phonetic element.¹⁰⁰²

5.3.3.1 A Single Phonetic Compound

A character’s meaning is often embedded in the sound. If the meaning of a phonetic element is not related to the phonetic compound, the sound serves as the source from which the meaning derives. The sound contains the source of the meaning, whereas the phonetic element is sometimes a loan character.

⁹⁹⁹ Chen Pengnian, *Xinjiao songben guangyun*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Liu Mengxi, *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu jingdian*, p. 655.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Zhang Taiyan quanji*, vol. 8, p. 179.

¹⁰⁰² Orthograph refers to the original character for which the phonetic element is borrowed.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 祿，福也。从示，叒聲。¹⁰⁰³

Lu 祿 means ‘good fortune’. It is comprised of *shi* 示 (issuing signs) with *lu* 叒 (carving wood) as the phonetic.

Note: Although there is no semantic link between 祿 (good fortune) and its phonetic element 叒 meaning ‘carving wood’, the pronunciation of 叒 provides an indication of the etymon of 祿. *Lu* 叒/*luk/ and *lu* 鹿 /*luk/ (deer) are homonyms. In archaic times, hunting was a common activity, and encountering ferocious beasts like tigers was perilous, while meeting docile animals like deer (鹿) was considered fortunate. Thus, deer came to symbolise bliss and good luck.¹⁰⁰⁴ This notion is supported by the explanation of the character *qing* 慶 in the *Shuowen*, which states: ‘慶 means “to congratulate others”. Deer skin was often used as a gift during celebratory rituals, hence 鹿 serves as a component of 慶.’¹⁰⁰⁵ Both the oracle bone inscription and the bronze inscription of 慶 feature 鹿 as one of its components.¹⁰⁰⁶ The meaning of the character 祿 might be derived from the pronunciation of 叒/*luk/, which is identical to the sound of 鹿 /*luk/. In certain instances in the *Shuowen*, 鹿 is replaced with 叒 /*luk/ when serving as a phonetic element, as seen in characters such as 漚 with its variant 漚 and 麓 with its variant 麓.¹⁰⁰⁷ Therefore, in the formation of the phonetic compound 祿, its phonetic element 叒 may be used for ‘deer’ (鹿), symbolising the sense of luck. Although the phonetic element 叒 itself does not convey meaning, its pronunciation suggests the source of the meaning of 祿.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 媯，好也。从女，彡聲。

¹⁰⁰³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Chen Xinxiong and Zeng Rongpan, *Wenzixue*, p. 201.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 509.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 932.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 566.

Shu 媠 denotes ‘pretty or fine’. It is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) with 夂 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此與姝音義皆同。¹⁰⁰⁸

It (媠) has the same sound and meaning as 姝.

Note: In the *Shuowen*, 夂, serving as the phonetic element of 媠, denotes ‘to beat a person with a stick’.¹⁰⁰⁹ The meaning of 夂 has nothing to do with the notion of ‘pretty or fine’. Duan pointed out that there is another character, *shu* 姝, which also means beautiful or fine. 夂 /*djug/ and 姝 /*thjug/ have similar initial consonants, which are tongue-head sounds, and the same final /*-jug/. They are near homonyms. It can be inferred that the meaning of 媠 stems from the pronunciation of 夂 /*djug/, which is near homophonous with 姝 /*thjug/, bearing the sense of ‘beautiful’.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 容，盛也。从宀，谷聲。

Rong 容 denotes ‘to contain’. It is comprised of *mian* 宀 (roof) with *gu* 谷 (valley) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 今字段借爲頌兒之頌。¹⁰¹⁰

The current 容 is borrowed for *song* 頌 (countenance, appearance).

Note: In the *Shuowen*, the meaning of *rong* 容 is ‘to hold or to contain’ (*rongna* 容納), bearing no relation to ‘appearance’ (*rongmao* 容貌). The original character for ‘appearance’ is *song* 頌 which is explained as ‘appearance’ in the *Shuowen*.¹⁰¹¹ 頌 has *ye* 頁 as its classifier. As *ye* 頁 originally means ‘head’,¹⁰¹² 頌 is also related to ‘head’. The variant form of 頌 is 頌 having 容 as its phonetic element.¹⁰¹³ Since 頌 and 頌 have the same sound and meaning, *song* 頌 /*grjung/, *song* 頌 /*grjung/, and *rong* 容 /*grjung/ are homonyms in Old Chinese.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 624.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 119.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid, p. 343.

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid, p. 420.

¹⁰¹² Ibid.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid.

Therefore, 容 may be a loan character for 頌 or 額 when denoting ‘appearance’.

The annotation under the sentence ‘*shiyi baojiao wei wu congsong ersi zhe, jiefei ye* 世以鮑焦為無從頌而死者，皆非也’ (Actually it is not right for people to believe that Bao Jiao was not broad-minded and thus invited death himself) from *Records of the Grand Historian*, ‘Biography of Lu Zhonglian’ states that ‘*congsong* 從頌 is pronounced as *congrong* 從容’.¹⁰¹⁴ Namely, *congsong* 從頌 is equivalent to *congrong* 從容, meaning being easy and broad-minded. This can serve as a supporting evidence for the interchangeable use between 容 and 頌.¹⁰¹⁵ Moreover, the interchangeable use between 容 and 頌 can also be seen in the Chu scripts.¹⁰¹⁶ Therefore, the meaning of ‘appearance’ in 容 comes from its pronunciation, which is identical to that of 頌 or 額.

Example 4:

Shuowen: 慈，愛也。从心，茲聲。¹⁰¹⁷

Ci 慈 denotes ‘loving-kindness’ (of an older person for a younger one). It is comprised of *xin* 心 (heart-mind) with *zi* 茲 as the phonetic.

Note: The phonetic element 茲 (a great abundance of herbage and wood) bears no relation to 慈 (loving-kindness). It could be suggested that the sense of ‘kindness’ comes from the pronunciation of 茲 /*dzjəg/, which is near homophonous with 子 /*tsjəg/ (child), who receives kindness from the elders. Table 22 below shows the sounds and meanings of these three characters. In the Chu scripts of the Warring States period, 子 can be used for 慈.¹⁰¹⁸ In ancient texts, such as the *Book of Documents*, *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (The Spring and

¹⁰¹⁴ Sima Qian *Shiji*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 244, p. 519.

¹⁰¹⁵ Scholars like Schuessler, Mei Tsu-lin and Sagart have argued that the prefix /*s-/ had the function of deriving verbs out of nouns. Accordingly, the prefix /*s-/ has a denominative function and derives the verb *song* 頌 /*s-[ɕ]oŋ-s/ (praise) out of the noun *rong* 容 (頌) /*[ɕ](r)oŋ/ (appearance). See Laurent Sagart’s *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p. 71.

¹⁰¹⁶ Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, p. 257.

¹⁰¹⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 508.

¹⁰¹⁸ Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, p. 9.

Autumn Annals of Yanzi), and *History of the Former Han*, 子 is also used for 慈.¹⁰¹⁹ For example, in the sentence ‘*yu fu zi 予弗子*’ (I did not take care of [him]) from the *Book of Documents*,¹⁰²⁰ 子 is used to represent 慈, conveying the meaning of ‘to take care of or to show kindness’. This demonstrates that the meaning of 慈 is conveyed primarily through the sound of its phonetic element 茲, rather than the meaning of 茲.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
<i>ci</i> 慈 (phonetic compound)	/*dzjæg/		love, kindness (from an older person to a younger one)
<i>zi</i> 茲 (phonetic element)	/*dzjæg/	茲 and 子 have similar initials, which are dental sibilants, and the same final /*-jæg/.	a great abundance of herbage and wood
<i>zi</i> 子 (the proposed orthograph which 茲 may be borrowed for)	/*tsjægx/		child

Table 22

Example 5:

Shuowen: 斲, 齒本也。从齒, 斤聲。¹⁰²¹

Yin 斲 denotes ‘the root of teeth’. It is comprised of *chi* 齒 (teeth) with *jin* 斤 (axe) as the phonetic.

Note: The phonetic element 斤 (axe) has no semantic connection with 斲 (the root of teeth). It could be suggested that the sense of ‘root’ comes from the sound of 斤 /*kjæn/, which is near homophonous with 根 /*kæn/ (root). Table 23 below shows the sounds and meanings of these three characters.

¹⁰¹⁹ Wang Haigen 王海根, *Gudai hanyu tongjiazi dazidian 古代漢語通假字大字典* [Great Compendium of Phonetic Loan Characters in Old Chinese] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2006), p. 211.

¹⁰²⁰ *Shangshu zhengyi 尚書正義* [Correct Meaning of the *Book of Documents*], notes by Kong Anguo 孔安國, expanded annotations by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 147.

¹⁰²¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 79.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
<i>yin</i> 斷 (phonetic compound)	/*ngjən/		the root of the teeth
<i>jin</i> 斤 (phonetic element)	/*kjən/	斤 and 根 are near homonyms as they have the same initial consonant /*k-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of <i>wen</i> 文/*-ən/.	axe
<i>gen</i> 根 (the proposed orthograph which 斤 may be borrowed for)	/*kən/		root

Table 23

Example 6:

Shuowen: 詩，志也。从言，寺聲。

Shi 詩 denotes ‘poetry which is to express one’s will (*zhi* 志)’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *si* 寺 (temple) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《毛詩序》曰：「詩者，志之所之也。在心爲志，發言爲詩。」¹⁰²²

The preface of *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* states: ‘Poetry is where one’s aspiration lies. When it resides in the heart, it remains an aspiration. When it is expressed in words, it becomes poetry.’

Shuowen: 志，意也。从心之，之亦聲。¹⁰²³

Zhi 志 denotes ‘intention or will’. It is comprised of *xin* 心 (heart-mind) and *zhi* 之 (to go to); 之 also stands for the sound.

Note: The meaning of *shi* 詩 (poetry) has no connection with its phonetic element *si* 寺 (temple). As both *si* 寺 and *zhi* 志 share the same phonetic element *zhi* 之 (to go to), 寺 /*rjəgh/ and 志 /*rjəgh/ are homonyms in Old Chinese. 志 indicates that to which the mind or inclination is directed. Since poetry is used to express one’s will, it could be suggested that the meaning of 詩 comes from the pronunciation of 寺 /*rjəgh/, which is identical to the sound of 志 /*rjəgh/, meaning ‘will or intention’. In the Warring States scripts, phonetic compounds with 寺 as the phonetic element, such as 時, 等, and 恃, can all be used for 志. 志 can also be

¹⁰²² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 91.

¹⁰²³ *Ibid*, p. 506.

used for 詩.¹⁰²⁴ This may serve as the supporting evidence for the borrowed use of 寺 for 志 in the character 詩.

Example 7:

Shuowen: 假，至也。从彳，段聲。

Jia 假 denotes ‘to reach’. It is comprised of *chi* 彳 (small step) with *jia* 段 (to borrow) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《方言》曰：假、徂，至也。¹⁰²⁵

Dialects states that both *jia* 假 and *ge* 徂 denote ‘to reach’.

Note: The phonetic element 段 (to borrow) bears no semantic link with 假 (to reach). It could be suggested that the sense of ‘reaching’ comes from the pronunciation of 段/*kragx/, which is near homophonous with 徂 /*krak/, meaning ‘arriving’. Table 24 below shows the sounds and meanings of these three characters. In Wang Li’s *Tongyuan zidian*, 假 and 徂 are considered cognate words that share the meaning of ‘reaching’.¹⁰²⁶

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
<i>jia</i> 假 (phonetic compound)	/*kragx/	段 and 徂 are near homonyms since they share the same initial consonant /*k-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of <i>yu</i> 魚 /*-ak/, /*-ag/.	to reach
<i>jia</i> 段 (phonetic element)			to borrow
<i>ge</i> 徂 (the proposed orthograph which 段 may be borrowed for)	/*krak/		to arrive

Table 24

5.3.3.2 A Series of Phonetic Compounds

If there is no semantic link between the shared phonetic element and the related series of phonetic compounds, the sound should be determined to seek the source of the meaning.

¹⁰²⁴ Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, pp. 21–24.

¹⁰²⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 77.

¹⁰²⁶ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 126.

Wang Ning expounds in her *Ancient Chinese*:

形聲的「從某得聲多有某義」的義，主要是由聲符字的聲音帶來的，與聲符的形關係不大。這一點從許多異體形聲字的聲符可以更換他形而得到證明。因此，歷史上的所謂的「右文說」實際上應該是「右聲說」。¹⁰²⁷

Regarding the principle that ‘characters sharing a given phonetic element often share a given meaning’, the ‘meaning’ here is mainly derived from the sound of the phonetic element but has less to do with the form of the phonetic element. This can be testified by the variant forms of phonetic compounds whose phonetic elements can be replaced with another one. Therefore, the so-called ‘*youwen* (the right-hand side of a graph) Theory’ should rather be called as ‘*yousheng* (the sound of the right-hand side of a graph) Theory’.

According to Wang Ning’s statements, it is the sound represented by the phonetic element that contains the source of meaning.

Example 1:

Shuowen: 袷，交衽也。从衣，金聲。

Jin 袷 denotes ‘collar or lapel of the coat’. It is comprised of *yi* 衣 (clothes) with *jin* 金 (gold) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡金聲、今聲之字皆有禁制之義。¹⁰²⁸

All the characters containing the phonetic element ‘*jin* 金’ (gold) or ‘*jin* 今’ (today) are associated with the concept of ‘forbidding’ (*jin* 禁).

Note: The characters *jin* 袷, *jin* 衿, and *jin* 襟 all denote ‘collar or lapel of the coat’, signifying ‘the overlap of a garment’. As the lapel marks the point where the left and right sides of the garment meet, it also conveys the sense of ‘ending’, which can extend to notions of ‘stopping’ and ‘forbidding’. For instance, *jin* 喙 signifies ‘shutting one’s mouth’, while *jin* 矜 conveys a sense of being ‘restrained or reserved’. Both 喙 and 矜 are associated with the idea of ‘restricting or prohibiting’. However, the characters ‘*jin* 金’ (gold) and ‘*jin* 今’ (today) are unrelated to the notion of ‘restricting or prohibiting’. Nevertheless, the pronunciation of 金 /*kjəm/ and 今 /*kjəm/ contain the source of the meaning, as they share a similar

¹⁰²⁷ Wang Ning, *Gudai hanyu*, p. 58.

¹⁰²⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 394.

pronunciation with *jin* 禁 /*kljəmh/, which means ‘to forbid’. Table 25 below presents the sounds and meanings of these characters. It could be suggested that the sense of ‘restricting or prohibiting’ comes from the pronunciation /*kjəm/, which is near homophonous with 禁 /*kljəmh/ (to forbid). In the Warring States scripts, *qin* 欽 (with the phonetic element 金) is used for 禁.¹⁰²⁹ Moreover, the character *jin* 襟 is a variant graph of 衿,¹⁰³⁰ providing supporting evidence for the borrowed use of 金 for 禁.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
<i>jin</i> 今 (phonetic element)	/*kjəm/	今, 金, and 禁 are near homonyms because they have similar initial consonants containing the velar /*k-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of <i>qin</i> 侵 /*-əm/.	today
<i>jin</i> 金 (phonetic element)			gold
<i>jin</i> 禁 (the proposed orthograph which 今 or 金 may be borrowed for)	/*kljəmh/		to forbid

Table 25

Example 2:

Shuowen: 砧, 石堅也。从石, 吉聲。¹⁰³¹

Qia 砧 denotes ‘solid rock’. It is comprised of *shi* 石 (stone) with *ji* 吉 (fortunate) as the phonetic.

Shuowen: 齧, (齒) 齧堅聲。从齒, 吉聲。¹⁰³²

Xia 齧 denotes ‘the sound of teeth biting hard things’. It is comprised of *chi* 齒 (teeth) with *ji* 吉 (fortunate) as the phonetic.

Note: The character *ji* 吉 (fortunate), serving as the phonetic element of 砧 and 齧, bears no semantic relation to ‘hard or solid’. However, the pronunciation of 吉 provides a clue. *Ji* 吉 is homophonous with *jian* 堅, the character for ‘solid or hard’. Thus, the sense of ‘hard’ may originate from the pronunciation /*kjit/, which is near homophonous with 堅 /*kin/.

¹⁰²⁹ Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, p. 357.

¹⁰³⁰ Li Xueqin, *Ziyuan*, p. 731.

¹⁰³¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 455.

¹⁰³² *Ibid*, p. 80.

Table 26 below outlines the sounds and meanings of the two characters.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
<i>ji</i> 吉 (phonetic element)	/*kjit/	吉 and 堅 have the same initial consonant /*k-/ and similar finals	fortunate
<i>jian</i> 堅 (the orthograph which 吉 may be borrowed for)	/*kin/		hard, solid

Table 26

Example 3:

Duan provided the following annotations under the character *biao* 莖, stating that ‘both *biao* 鏢 (point of a knife), with the classifier *jin* 金 (metal), and *biao* 標 (tip of a branch), with the classifier *mu* 木 (wood), are glossed as “tip or ending”. *Biao* 莖, with the classifier grass, denotes “tip of grass”.¹⁰³³ Duan also offered the following annotation under the character *piao* 驃, noting that ‘the yellow horse with white spots is called 驃. *Piao* 票/*phjiagw/ and *biao* 彪/*bragw/ are near homonyms in Old Chinese. *Piao* 驃 signifies “yellowish-white cattle”. ‘Neize’ notes that “*niao piaose* 鳥驃色 means the bird’s feathers are white (*piao* 驃)”.¹⁰³⁴

Phonetic compounds with 票 as the phonetic element often relate to the notion of ‘tip or ending’, such as 鏢 (point of a knife), 標 (tip of a branch), and 莖 (tip of grass).¹⁰³⁵ However, the character 驃 denotes ‘the yellow horse with white spots’. Duan pointed out that the sense of ‘white’ in 驃 comes from the pronunciation of 票/*phjiagw/, which is near homophonous with 彪/*bragw/, the phonetic element of 驃 and 驃, bearing the sense of ‘white’. *Piao* 票/*phjiagw/ and *biao* 彪/*bragw/ have similar initials, which are bilabial sounds, and belong

¹⁰³³ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 38.

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid, p. 52.

¹⁰³⁵ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 3, p. 1359.

to the same rhyme group of *xiao* 宵 /*-agw/. Thus, they are near homonyms. It is evident that the phonetic element 票 of 驃 is borrowed for 麋.

Example 4:

Shuowen: 歟，安氣也。从欠，與聲。

Yu 歟 denotes ‘slow breathing’. It is comprised of *qian* 欠 (to exhale) with *yu* 與 (to give, to grant) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 如趨為安行，鸞為馬行疾而徐。音同義相近也。¹⁰³⁶

Yu 趨 denotes ‘to walk steadily’. *Yu* 鸞 denotes ‘a horse moving slowly and then swiftly’. These characters are homonyms and thus have a similar meaning.

Shuowen: 紓：緩也。从糸，予聲。

Shu 紓 means ‘slow’. It is comprised of *mi* 糸 (silk) with *yu* 予 (to bestow) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 亦段紓為之。¹⁰³⁷

Shu 紓 can be borrowed for 紓.

Note: The meanings of 歟, 趨, 紓, and 紓 are all related to the notion of ‘slow’. The phonetic elements of these phonetic compounds are respectively *yu* 與 (to grant) and *yu* 予 (to bestow), neither of which is related to ‘slow’. The character 余 is defined as ‘soothing tone’ in the *Shuowen*.¹⁰³⁸ Phonetic compounds with 余 as their phonetic element are mostly related to the sense of ‘slow’.¹⁰³⁹

For example:

Shuowen: 徐，緩也。从人，余聲。¹⁰⁴⁰

Xu 徐 means ‘slow’. It is comprised of *ren* 人 (people) with *yu* 余 as the phonetic.

Shuowen: 徐，安行也。从彳，余聲。¹⁰⁴¹

Xu 徐 means ‘to proceed calmly’. It is comprised of *chi* 彳 (small step) with *yu* 余 as the phonetic.

¹⁰³⁶ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 415.

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid, p. 381.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid, p. 50.

¹⁰³⁹ Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 2, p. 706.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 652.

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid, p. 77.

Note: The sense of ‘slow’ contained in 歟, 趨, 紓, and 抒 might be derived from the pronunciation of their phonetic element 與 /*ragx/ and 予 /*ragx/, which is identical to the sound of 余 /*rag/. The borrowed use between 余 and 予 can also be seen in the ancient texts and in the Chu scripts.¹⁰⁴² Table 27 below presents the sounds and meanings of these characters.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship	Meaning
yu 與	/*ragx/	homonyms	to give, to grant
yu 予			to bestow
yu 余 (the orthograph which 與 and 予 may be borrowed for)	/*rag/		calm tone

Table 27

The examples above demonstrate that the meanings of phonetic compounds are derived from the sounds of their phonetic elements rather than the meanings of their phonetic elements, since the phonetic elements are sometimes loan graphs. Therefore, sound is the main approach to seeking the source of the meaning of a character, whereas graphic form is not the only factor to be taken into account. The phonetic compounds with the same pronunciation may be semantically related, regardless of different forms of their phonetic elements.

5.3.4 Recognition of Polysyllabic Morphemes

Polysyllabic morphemes (*lianmian ci* 聯綿詞) signify words created through sound, regardless of the meaning of individual characters. Typically, they consist of two alliterative or rhymed syllables that cannot be separately interpreted. Due to variations over time and

¹⁰⁴² Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, p. 82.

space, one group of polysyllabic morphemes contains only one meaning but can be written in different forms. Sun Jingtao observes that ‘with their empirical experience, scholars commonly understand *lianmian zi* from two angles: first, there is normally not a semantic relationship between the two single syllables and the whole binom; second, the two component parts of the binom are usually phonologically related to each other, and this relationship is sub-categorised as *shuangsheng* 雙聲 (alliteration) and *dieyun* 疊韻 (rhyming). However, it is not necessary for *lianmian zi* to satisfy such phonological requirements.’¹⁰⁴³ Zhao Keqin notes that ‘a polysyllabic morpheme should contain only one morpheme and consist of two characters that denote only sound but no meaning.’¹⁰⁴⁴ Jiang Shaoyu makes a similar statement, noting that ‘in a polysyllabic morpheme, each character represents a syllable, and only the combination of the two characters represents a word.’¹⁰⁴⁵

In his annotations to the *Shuowen*, Duan clarified the phonetic relationship between polysyllabic morphemes, emphasising that they are created according to sound without a fixed form. Seeking meaning through outward form can result in inconsistency and perplexity, whereas seeking meaning through sound leads to consistency and clarity. Pu Zhizhen remarks that Duan’s recognition of polysyllabic morphemes demonstrated his scientific understanding of the difference between character and word and the rules of word formation.¹⁰⁴⁶ The following are the examples of Duan’s insights on polysyllabic morphemes:

Example 1:

Shuowen: 躄, 躄躄, 逗足也。

Di 躄 denotes ‘to halt (*dizhu* 躄躄) or to stop walking’.

¹⁰⁴³ Sun Jingtao, *Reduplication in Old Chinese*. PhD dissertation (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1999), p. 33.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Zhao Keqin, *Gudai hanyu cihuixue*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Jiang Shaoyu, *Guhanyu cihui gangyao*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Pu Zhizhen, *Zhongguo yuyanxue*, p. 369.

Duanzhu: 躑躅之雙聲、疊韻，曰踟躕，曰踟蹰，曰峙蹰，曰躑箸。俗用躊躇。
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There are words which either alliterate or rhyme with 躑躅, such as *chichu* 踟躕, *chizhu* 踟蹰, *zhichu* 峙蹰, and *chouzhu* 躑箸. The popular form of this binom is *chouchu* 躊躇.

Note: Duan also provided the following annotation under the character *zhi* 峙 (undetermined), noting that ‘all the words, including 躑箸 under the classifier *xin* 心 (heart-mind), 躑躅 under the classifier *zu* 足 (foot), 踟躕 in *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry*, and 躑躅 and 踟蹰 in *Guangya*, share the same meaning due to alliteration or rhyming.’¹⁰⁴⁸ Sun Jingtao refers to this binom in his *Reduplication in Old Chinese*, noting that ‘in Old Chinese texts, 踟躕 has many variants such as 躊躇 and 躑躅. They are not identical from the point of view of phonology, but they are quite close.’¹⁰⁴⁹

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship
<i>di</i> 躑	/*drjik/	躑, 踟, 峙, 躊 (躑), and 踟 have the same initial consonant /*d-/
<i>chi</i> 踟	/*drjar/	
<i>chi</i> 踟	/*darh/	
<i>zhi</i> 峙	/*drjəgx/	
<i>chou</i> 躊 (躑)	/*dəgwh/	

Table 28

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship
<i>zhu</i> 躅	/*drjuk/	躅, 躑, 踟, 蹰, and 箸 (蹰) have similar initials which are tongue-head sounds. 躅, 躑, and 踟 belong to the same rhyme group of <i>hou</i> 候 /*-uk/. 蹰 and 箸 (蹰) belong to the same rhyme group of <i>yu</i> 魚 /*-ak/.
<i>chu</i> 躑	/*drjug/	
<i>zhu</i> 踟	/*trjug/	
<i>chu</i> 蹰	/*drag/	
<i>zhu</i> 箸 (蹰)	/*trjagh/	

Table 29

¹⁰⁴⁷ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Sun Jingtao, *Reduplication in Old Chinese*. PhD dissertation, p. 105.

According to the phonetic analysis presented in Table 28 and 29, the words *dizhu* 躅躅, *chichu* 踟躕, *chizhu* 踟踌, *zhichu* 峙踌, and *chouzhu* 籒箸 exhibit variations in graphic forms while maintain similarity in sound and meaning. The two characters in each variant binom have similar initial consonants (/d-/, /t-/) which are tongue-head sounds. Duan cited references from *Guangya* and *Mao's Commentary* to illustrate the variant forms of this disyllabic compound.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 仿, 仿佛, 相似。

Fang 仿 means ‘as if’ (*fangfu* 仿佛), in other words, ‘be alike’.

Duanzhu: 仿佛, 雙聲疊字也……仿佛或作侖佛, 或作髣髴, 或作拂拏, 或作放慧, 俗作彷彿。¹⁰⁵⁰

The word *fangfu* 仿佛 is an alliterative syllable…… *Fangfu* 仿佛 is also written as *fangfu* 侖佛, *fangfu* 髣髴, *fufang* 拂拏, or *fangfu* 放慧. The popular form is written as *fangfu* 彷彿.

Note: According to *All Pronunciations and Meanings of the Sutras*, ‘*Fangfu* 髣髴 means resembling, indicating “looking like”. Its ancient form is written as “*fangfu* 肪腓” having the same usage as “*fangfu* 仿佛” in the *Shuowen*.’¹⁰⁵¹ An example can be found in the *History of the Former Han*, ‘Biography of Yang Xiong’: ‘It seems like (仿佛) a dream.’ Yan Shigu noted: ‘仿佛 means 髣髴’.¹⁰⁵²

The characters 仿 /*phjangx/, 髣 /*phjangx/, 肪 /*bjang/, 拏 /*pjang/, 彷彿 /*phjangx/, and 放 /*pjangh/ share the same phonetic element *fang* 方 /*pjang/. They have similar initial consonants, which are bilabial sounds, and belong to the same rhyme group of *yang* 陽 /*-ang/. Therefore, these characters are near homonyms in Old Chinese. The same applies to 佛

¹⁰⁵⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 374.

¹⁰⁵¹ Shi Huilin 釋慧琳 (737–820), *Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義 [All Pronunciations and Meanings of the Sutras], ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu, vol. 196, p. 558.

¹⁰⁵² *Qianhanshu* 前漢書 [History of the Former Han], comp. by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), notes by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645), ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 251, p. 73.

/*bjət/, 髯 /*phjət/, 拂 /*bjət/, 拂 /phjət/, 佛 /*phjət/, and 慧 /*bjət/, which share the same phonetic element *fu* 弗 /*pjət/. Additionally, the character 俩 has *bing* 丙 as its phonetic element. 丙 /*pjiangx/ and 方 /*pjang/ have the same initial consonant /*p-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of *yang* 陽 /*-ang/. Accordingly, the words 俩佛, 髯髯, 肪拂, 枋拂, and 放慧, which have the same pattern and consistent phonological alternation, have the same meaning as ‘being alike’ and can be used interchangeably. The two characters in each variant binom have similar initial consonants, which are bilabials.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 裴, 長衣兒。

Pei 裴 denotes ‘the appearance of long garments or robes’.

Duanzhu: 若《史記·子虛賦》:「弭節裴回」, 乃長衣引伸之義。《後漢書·蘇竟傳》注云:「裴回, 謂縈繞淹留是也。」俗乃作「徘徊」, 「徘徊」矣。¹⁰⁵³

In the sentence ‘*mijie peihui* 弭節裴回’ (to halt and to pace back and forth) from *Records of the Grand Historian*, ‘Zixufu’, the character *pei* 裴 bears an extended meaning from ‘the appearance of long garments or robes’. In the annotations to *Record of the Late Han Dynasty*, ‘Biography of Su Jing’, the word *peihui* 裴回 is explained as ‘to walk back and forth’. The popular form of 裴回 is written as *paihuai* 徘徊 or *paihuai* 徘徊.

Note: According to *Guangya*, ‘*paihuai* 徘徊 refers to hanging around (*pianxuan* 便旋)’.

¹⁰⁵⁴ The annotation of ‘*paihui wanglai* 徘徊往來’ (to walk back and forth) from the *History of the Former Han*, ‘Biography of Queen Gao’ states: ‘*Paihui* 徘徊 is similar to *panghuang* 彷徨, meaning “lingering on”’.¹⁰⁵⁵ From Table 30 and 31 below, we can see that the words *peihui* 裴回, *peihui* 裴回, *paihuai* 徘徊, and *peihui* 徘徊, sharing the same pattern and a similar pronunciation, have the same meaning as ‘to walk back and forth’. The two characters in each variant are rhymed syllables, which belong to the rhyme group of *wei* 微 /*-əd/.

¹⁰⁵³ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 398.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 464.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Qianhanshu*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 249, p. 78.

presented variant forms of the polysyllabic morpheme 裴回. However, his assertion that ‘in the word 裴回, 裴 bears an extended meaning from “the appearance of long garments or robes”’ was erroneous, as he explained the meaning of 裴 separately from the binom 裴回.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship
<i>pei</i> 裴 (裴)	/*bəd/	near homonyms (They share the same initial consonant /*b-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of <i>wei</i> 微 /*-əd/).
<i>pai</i> 俳		
<i>pai</i> 俳	/*brəd/	

Table 30

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship
<i>hui</i> 回	/*gwəd/	homonyms
<i>hui</i> 徊, <i>hui</i> 徊	/*gwəd/	

Table 31

Example 4:

Shuowen: 猶, 獼屬.

You 猶 is a kind of large ape.

Duanzhu: 《曲禮》曰:「使民決嫌疑, 定猶豫。」《正義》云:「《說文》: 猶, 獼屬。豫, 象屬。此二獸皆進退多疑, 人多疑惑者似之, 故謂之猶豫。」按, 古有以聲不以義者。如「猶豫」雙聲, 亦作「猶與」, 亦作「允豫」, 皆遲疑之兒。《老子》:「豫兮如冬涉川, 猶兮若畏四鄰。」《離騷》:「心猶豫而狐疑。」¹⁰⁵⁶

‘Quli’ states: ‘Help people overcome doubt and hesitation’. *Correct Meaning of the Book of Rites* notes: ‘*You* 猶 is a kind of monkey. *Yu* 豫 is a kind of elephant. They are both cautious and timid animals. People who hesitate and doubt are like these animals. Thus, 猶豫 is used to describe this kind of people. In ancient times, some words convey ideas through sound rather than the meaning of each character. For instance, the polysyllabic morpheme *youyu* 猶豫 is also written as *youyu* 猶與 or *youyu* 允豫. They all connote the sense of ‘hesitating’. Examples can be found in the sentence ‘*yuxi rudong shechuan, youxi ruowei silin* 豫兮如冬涉川, 猶兮若畏四鄰’ (Hesitant as one who crosses a frozen river in winter. Cautious as one who is wary of hostile neighbours) from *Laozi* and ‘*xin youyu er huyi* 心猶豫而狐疑’ (I was wavering and could not make my mind up) from *The Songs of Chu*.

Note: Duan illustrated the feature of polysyllabic morpheme which is ‘conveying ideas

¹⁰⁵⁶ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 481.

through sound rather than the meaning of each character'. However, Duan did not explicitly point out the misinterpretation in *Correct Meaning of the Book of Rites*, which respectively explains the characters 猶 and 豫, rather than recognising them as syllables in a polysyllabic morpheme. From Table 32 and 33 below, we can see that the words 猶豫, 猶與, and 尤豫 have similar pronunciations. In addition, the two syllables in each variant group have the same initial consonant, a dental flap /*r-/. Namely, they present a consistent phonological alternation and denote the same meaning.

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship
<i>you</i> 猶	/*rəgw/	猶 and 尤 have the same initial consonant /*r-/
<i>you</i> 尤	/*rəm/	

Table 32

Characters	Phonetic reconstruction in Old Chinese	Phonetic relationship
<i>yu</i> 豫	/*ragh/	homonyms
<i>yu</i> 與	/*ragx/	

Table 33

5.4 Recognising Phonetic Borrowing

The theory and practice of ‘seeking meaning through sound’ by Qing scholars primarily address two aspects: etymology and phonetic borrowing.¹⁰⁵⁷ In classical Chinese texts, especially in pre-Qin texts, the phenomenon of homophonic substitution of the same word often occurs within the same quotation from different texts. These homophonic substitutions rely on sound identification, which involves phonetic borrowing, variant graphs, and cognate words. Haeree Park observes that non-unique selections of graphic components for one and the same word are reflected in the writing system of the Zhou period, respectively, as systematic alternations of signfic and phonophoric elements (i.e., phonetic elements) of the

¹⁰⁵⁷ Zhao Keqin, *Gudai hanyu cihuixue*, p. 225.

same functional value, viz., Synonymous Significs and Equivalent Phonophorics.¹⁰⁵⁸ In his *Supplementary Corrections to the General Theory of Warring States Scripts*, He Linyi provides many examples from Warring States scripts illustrating the fluidity of classifiers and phonetic elements, both of which are either optional or interchangeable.¹⁰⁵⁹ During the pre-Qin period, the writing system was not yet standardised, and characters were relatively fewer in number. Language held a dominant position over the writing system. Consequently, one character might not necessarily represent its own meaning but could be used to convey the meaning of another homonym. This ‘disconnection’ between meaning and form poses one of the challenges of reading ancient texts.

Duan emphasised that ‘in archaic times, when the number of graphs was limited, sound took precedence over form in conveying meaning’ (*Gushi zishao, yisheng tuoshi* 古時字少，依聲托事).¹⁰⁶⁰ As the graphic form of a loan graph does not align with the meaning that it signifies, sound becomes the key to seeking the meaning behind a loan character. Zhu Junsheng noted that ‘one cannot comprehend the ancient texts without knowing phonetic borrowing. One cannot recognise phonetic borrowing without the mastery of Old Chinese phonology’.¹⁰⁶¹ Jane Geaney also states: ‘Discoveries over the past fifty years show that, orthographic inconsistency is a fundamental feature of recently excavated early Chinese texts... (Ancient) scribes conceived of graphs as the means for writing word-types, they must

¹⁰⁵⁸ Haeree Park, ‘Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts’, *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63, 4 (2009): 857.

¹⁰⁵⁹ He Linyi 何琳儀 (1943–2017), *Zhanguo wenzi tonglun dingbu* 戰國文字通論訂補 [Supplementary Corrections to the General Theory of Warring States Scripts] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2017), pp. 319–359.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁶¹ Zhu Junsheng 朱駿聲 (1788–1858), *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* 說文通訓定聲 [The *Shuowen* Rearranged and Studied According to Semantic and Phonetic Affinities], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 220, p. 93. The original Chinese text is: ‘不知假借者，不可與讀古書。不明古音者，不足以識假借。’

have understood themselves to be using graphs to write the intended sounds. As long as the intended sound was understood, some leeway in the depiction of the graph was acceptable; the sounds would have determined the identity of the visual graph.¹⁰⁶² Sound plays a critical role in addressing textual variants, which are prevalent in early ancient texts. As Galambos observes, ‘people who wrote or read these variants were primarily concerned with what meaning and sound a character could represent, not with its graphical structure.’¹⁰⁶³ In the *Duanzhu*, Duan often employed the method of *yinsheng qiuyi* to tackle the challenges stemming from homophonic substitutions and to decipher the meaning represented by substitutional characters.

5.4.1 Principles of Phonetic Borrowing Proposed by Duan Yucai

In his annotations to Xu’s preface to the *Shuowen*, Duan elaborated on three stages of loan characters, which subsequently inspired later scholars to delve deeper into this aspect:

大氏段借之始，始於本無其字；及其後也，既有其字矣，而多為段借。又其後也，且至後代譌字，亦得自冒於段借。博綜古今，有此三變。以許書言之，本無「難易」二字，而以「難鳥」「蜥蜴」之字為之，此所謂無字依聲者也。至於經傳子史，不用本字，而好用段借字，此或古古積傳，或轉寫變易。¹⁰⁶⁴

Generally speaking, a loan character originally represented a word for which there was no existing graphic form. Subsequently, it could also come to represent a word with an existing graphic form. Eventually, even a wrongly written character could be used as a loan character. Therefore, phonetic borrowing underwent three stages of transformation. For instance, according to the *Shuowen*, there were originally no characters for ‘difficult’ (*nan* 難) or ‘easy’ (*yi* 易). *Nan* 難, the character for ‘a kind of bird’ (*nanniao* 難鳥), comes to represent ‘difficult’. *Yi* 易, the character for ‘lizard’ (*xiyi* 蜥蜴), is borrowed to signify ‘easy’. These examples illustrate the concept of loan characters, referring to non-existent characters created from the sounds of existing ones.¹⁰⁶⁵ The

¹⁰⁶² Jane Geaney, *Language as Bodily Practice in Early China: A Chinese Grammatology*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶³ Imre Galambos, ‘The Evolution of Chinese Writing Evidence from Newly Excavated Texts (490–221 BC)’ Ph.D. dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 2002), p. 2.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 764.

¹⁰⁶⁵ The English term ‘phonetic borrowing’ or ‘loan character’ corresponds to two traditional Chinese linguistic terms that remain in current usage: ‘*jiajie*’ 假借 or ‘*jiajie zi*’ 假借字, referring to instances where a word which originally lacking a graphical representation is written with a character used for a

use of loan characters despite the existence of a ‘proper’ character in ancient texts sometimes results from transmission over many generations or changes occurring in the process of transcription.

Huang Kan 黄侃 also specified that the phonetic borrowing method originally referred to ‘using existing characters to represent words for which there is no character owing to sound identification’, according to the statements in the *Shuowen*. This represents the typical case of phonetic borrowing. Additionally, there is another kind of loan character used to represent an existing homonym. Both of these two cases require sound identification.¹⁰⁶⁶ Duan’s and Huang’s words correspond to Park’s statements that among all kinds of textual variations in early Chinese texts, the most frequently encountered is the use of different ways to write the same word. Philologists in the Qing dynasty recognised that distinct characters appearing in matching textual positions in different redactions of early Chinese texts are, in most cases, phonologically similar to each other. They thus surmised that in ancient times, one character normally associated with a certain word could be used alternatively for a different word that was similar in pronunciation. This is what is now conventionally referred to as *tongjia zi*, or ‘phonetic loan characters’.¹⁰⁶⁷

In addition, the alleged ‘burning of books’ during the Qin dynasty (221–ca.206 BCE) led to the damage of the Confucian Classics.¹⁰⁶⁸ Many Han scholars attempted to restore the lost texts and rewrote the pre-Han texts according to their memories. Thus, there were inevitably

homophonous or nearly homophonous word, and ‘*tongjia*’ 通假 or ‘*tongjia zi*’ 通假字, referring to instances where a word possessing an existing graphic representation is written with a character used for a homophonous or nearly homophonous word. Given the frequent interchangeability of these two terms, this dissertation employs the term ‘phonetic borrowing’ to encompass both phenomena.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Lin Yin, *Wenzixue gaishuo*, p. 192.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Haeree Park, ‘Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts’, *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63. 4 (2009): 857.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Despite Sima Qian’s clear statement that the Qin ‘burned all the copies of the *Poems* and *Documents* in the world,’ some scholars like Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162) argued that Qin did not extinguish Confucian Learning and the destruction was not intended to be universal. See David B. Honey, *A History of Chinese Classical Scholarship*, vol. II, pp. 12–17.

some characters where these Han scholars only remembered the pronunciations but had forgotten the graphic forms. They borrowed other homonyms to replace them. The loan characters varied according to the dialects and cultural background of these Han scholars. This is one of the main factors behind the frequent occurrence of loan characters and textual variants in pre-Han texts which have been edited by these Han scholars. As the Qing scholar Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814) stated that ‘a homonym wrongly written by vulgar bookmen is called a misused character’.¹⁰⁶⁹ Galambos also observes that scribes and other literate people in early China often wrote characters, especially complex ones, with variable structure, attesting to the relatively flexible attitude towards orthographic uniformity at the time. Technically speaking, these variants were not seen as ‘mistakes’ but merely alternate, and perfectly acceptable, ways of writing the same character.¹⁰⁷⁰

Since the Tang dynasty when the study of character styles became popular, the forms of characters were gradually fixed and standardised. Books like *Jiujing ziyang* 九經字樣 (Standards of Character Forms in the Nine Classics) written in 837 CE and *Wujing wenzi* 五經文字 (Standards of Character Forms in the Five Classics) written in 776 CE, aimed to standardise the graphic forms of Chinese characters. Thereafter, the writing system, that is to say, the graphic forms of the regular scripts were fixed.¹⁰⁷¹ As a result, loan characters have been much less frequently applied since then.

In his annotations to the *Shuowen*, Duan presented different phonetic relationships between orthographs and loan graphs to demonstrate that phonetic borrowing could occur

¹⁰⁶⁹ Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814), *Gaiyu congkao* 陔餘叢考 [Verification During Leisure Time], ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 1151, p. 604. The original Chinese text is: ‘字之音同而異義者，俗儒不知，輒誤寫用，世所謂別字也。’

¹⁰⁷⁰ Imre Galambos, ‘The Chinese Writing system’, *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature*, eds. Wiebke Denecke, Li Wai-ye, and Tian Xiaofei, p. 37.

¹⁰⁷¹ Lin Yin, *Wenzixue gaishuo*, p. 38.

between characters that belong to the same rhyme group, as well as between characters that are either alliterative syllables or rhymed syllables. He also showed that phonetic borrowing between homonyms is widely applied.¹⁰⁷² The following have been selected with the aim to show the different types of phonetic borrowing that Duan proposed in his annotations.

5.4.1.1 Phonetic Borrowing between Homonyms

Example 1:

Shuowen: 詖，辨論也。古文以為頗字。从言，皮聲。

Bi 詖 denotes ‘to argue’. 詖 is used for *po* 頗 (being deflected on one side) in ancient scripts. 詖 is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *pi* 皮 (skin, fur) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此古文同音假借也。頗，偏也。¹⁰⁷³

This is the phonetic borrowing between homonyms in ancient scripts. *Po* 頗 means ‘being deflected on one side’.

Note: As 詖 /*pjiar/ and 頗/*phar/ share the same phonetic element 皮, they are near homonyms, with the same initial consonant /*p-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of *ge* 歌 /*-ar/.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 甫，男子之美稱也。从用父，父亦聲。

Fu 甫 is an honorific suffix added to a male’s given name. The character is comprised of *yong* 用 (to use) and *fu* 父 (father). 父 also indicates the sound.

Duanzhu: 《士冠禮》，「甫」作「父」，他經「某甫」之「甫」亦通用「父」，同音假借也。¹⁰⁷⁴

In the *Book of Rites*, ‘Shiguan Ritual’, *fu* 甫 is written as *fu* 父. 父 being used for 甫 also appears in other classics. This is the phonetic borrowing between homonyms.

Note: 父 /*bjagx/ is the phonetic element of 甫 /*pjagx/, thus the two characters are near homonyms with similar initial consonants, which are bilabial sounds, and the same final.

¹⁰⁷² Loan graph denotes loan character. Orthograph refers to the original character for which the loan graph is borrowed.

¹⁰⁷³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 129.


Example 3:

Shuowen: 悅，帥或从兌聲。

Shui 悅 (handkerchief), with *dui* 兌 as its phonetic, *shuai* 帥 is a variant form of 悅.

Duanzhu: 率與帥古多通用。如《周禮·樂師》:「故書『帥』爲『率』。」《聘禮》古文「帥」皆作「率」……後世分文析字，「悅」訓巾，「帥」訓率導，訓將帥，而帥之本義廢矣。率導、將帥字在許書作「逵」、作「衛」，而不作「帥」與「率」。六書惟同音段借之用最廣。¹⁰⁷⁵

Shuai 率 (to lead) and *shuai* 帥 (handkerchief) were often used for each other in ancient times. For instance, in the ancient version of the *Zhou Rites*, ‘The Chief Master of Music’, 帥 is used for 率. In *Ceremonial Etiquette*, ‘Pinli’, 率 is used for 帥 in ancient scripts...In later times, 悅 is glossed as ‘handkerchief’, while 帥 is glossed as ‘to lead or leader’. 帥 no longer stands for ‘handkerchief’. In addition, in the *Shuowen*, the words for ‘leading’ and ‘leader’ are represented by *shuai* 逵 and *shuai* 衛 rather than 率 and 帥. Phonetic borrowing among homonyms is the most widely applied.

Note: Since the *fanqie* spellings of 率 and 帥 are both *suolü* 所律,¹⁰⁷⁶ 率 /*sljət/ and 帥 /*srjət/ are near homonyms, having similar initial consonants and the same final. In addition, since 逵 and 衛 share the same phonetic element 率, 逵, 衛, and 率 are homonyms in Old Chinese.¹⁰⁷⁷ In the bronze inscriptions, 率 is written as . Scholars such as Gao Hongjin 高鴻縉 suggest that 率 originally meant ‘to lead people walking on the road’. The original graph for ‘leading’ should be 率, not 帥.¹⁰⁷⁸

5.4.1.2 Phonetic Borrowing between Alliterative Syllables

Example 1:

Shuowen: 洒，滌也。从水，西聲。古文以為灑掃字。

Xi 洒 denotes ‘to wash’. It is comprised of *shui* 水 (water) with *xi* 西 (west) as the phonetic. 洒 is used for *sa* 灑 (to sprinkle) for cleaning in ancient scripts.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 361.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 669.

¹⁰⁷⁷ In terms of Baxter and Sagart’s reconstruction system, the suffix /*-s/ has a function of deriving nouns from verbs. In this example, through the addition of suffix /*-s/, the noun *shuai* 帥 /*s-rut-s/ (leader of an army) was derived from the verb *shuai* 率 /*s-rut/ (to lead, to go along). Moreover, the departing tone of *shuài* 帥 in Middle Chinese derived from the suffix /*-s/. See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart’s *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 321.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Zhou Fagao, *Jinwen gulin*, vol. 13, p. 7362.

Duanzhu: 凡言某字古文以為某字者，皆謂古文假借字也。洒、灑本殊義，而雙聲，故相假借。凡假借多疊韻，或雙聲也。《毛詩》「洒埽」四見。《傳》云：「洒，灑也。」¹⁰⁷⁹

When [Xu Shen] says ‘A is used for B in ancient scripts’, he refers to the phonetic borrowing in ancient scripts. 洒 and 灑 originally carry different meanings. However, as they are alliterative syllables, 洒 can be borrowed for 灑. Phonetic borrowing often appears between characters which are rhymed syllables or alliterative syllables. The word 洒埽 appears four times in *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry*. Mao notes that ‘洒 is equivalent to 灑.’

Note: The characters 洒 /*sidx/ and 灑 /*sligx/ have similar initial consonants and the same main vowel /*i-/.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 坡，阪也。从土，皮聲。

Po 坡 denotes ‘flank of a hill or a slope’. It is comprised of *tu* 土 (earth) with *pi* 皮 (skin, fur) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《毛詩》：「隰則有泮。」《傳》曰：「泮，坡也。」此釋段借之法，謂「泮」即「坡」之雙聲段借也。¹⁰⁸⁰

For the sentence ‘*xize youpan* 隰則有泮’ (The swamp has its shores) from the *Book of Poetry*, *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* notes that ‘泮 stands for *po* 坡.’ Here Mao refers to the method of phonetic borrowing. Namely, 泮 is borrowed for 坡 (slope) owing to alliteration.

Note: The characters 坡 /*phar/ and 泮 /*phanx/ have the same initial consonant /*ph-/ and the same main vowel /*a-/.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 鷓，伯勞也。从鳥，昊聲。

Ju 鷓 denotes ‘shrike’. It is comprised of *niao* 鳥 (bird) with *ju* 昊 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 鷓，《夏小正》、《孟子》作「鷓」，乃雙聲假借字。¹⁰⁸¹

Ju 鷓 is written as *jue* 鷓 in the *Book of Rites of the Elder Dai*, ‘*Xi Xiaozheng*’ and *Mencius*. It is the phonetic borrowing based on alliterative syllables.

Note: The characters 鷓 /*kwik/ and 鷓 /*kwiet/ have the same initial consonant /*kw-/.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 568.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 689.

¹⁰⁸¹ Ibid, p. 151.

5.4.1.3 Phonetic Borrowing between Rhymed Syllables

Example 1:

Shuowen: 窳，悉也。知審諦也。从宀，从采。

Shen 窳 denotes ‘to scrutinise’, meaning to carefully examine (*di* 諦). It is comprised of *mian* 宀 (roof) and *bian* 采 (to distinguish).

Duanzhu: 諦，《廣韻》引作「諛」，古同部假借也。¹⁰⁸²

The character *di* 諦 is written as ‘*di* 諛’ in *Guangyun*. It is the phonetic borrowing from the same rhyme group in Old Chinese.

Note: The characters 諦 /*tigh/ and 諛 /*digx/ not only belong to the same rhyme group of *jia* 佳/*-ig/, but also have similar initials which are tongue-head sounds.

Example 2:

Shuowen: 跬，半步也。从走，圭聲。

Kui 跬 denotes ‘half of a pace’. It is comprised of *zou* 走 (to walk) with *gui* 圭 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《伍被傳》作「窺」，同部假借。¹⁰⁸³

In the *History of the Former Han*, ‘Biography of Wu Pi’, *kui* 跬 is written as *kui* 窺. This is the phonetic borrowing between the characters which belong to the same rhyme group in Old Chinese.

Note: Since 跬 /*khwjigx/ and 窺 /*khwjig/ not only belong to the same rhyme group *jia* 佳/*-ig/, but also have the same initial consonant /*khw-/. Namely, they are homonyms.

Duan’s phonetic analysis was partly correct.

Example 3:

Shuowen: 媿，姿媿，姿也。从女，佳也。

Hui 媿 denotes ‘indulging’. 媿 combines the intentions of *nü* 女 (woman) and *zhui* 隹 (short-tailed bird).

Duanzhu: 今用「雖」爲語詞，有縱恣之意。蓋本當作「媿」，段「雖」爲之耳。「雖」行而「媿」廢矣。¹⁰⁸⁴

The current use of *sui* 雖 is a functional word bearing the sense of indulgence. It could be suggested that 雖 is used for 媿 when denoting ‘indulgence’. The character 媿 is no

¹⁰⁸² Duan Yucui, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid, p. 66

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 630.

longer in use and has been replaced by 雖.

Note: 雉 /*hwjiəd/ and 雖 /*stjəd/ belong to the same rhyme group of *wei* 微 /*-əd/.

According to Duan's words, phonetic borrowing applies to the characters that are (indirectly) rhymed syllables, (approximately) alliterative syllables, or homonyms. Modern philologist Hu Pu'an 胡樸安 (1878–1947) states that 'phonetic borrowing is based on alliterative syllables or rhymed syllables. If we have difficulty when reading ancient texts, try to replace the loan character with the one which is alliterative or rhymed with the loan character in Old Chinese. When the original character has been retrieved, the blocking in reading is removed. Thus, phonetic borrowing is a crucial point in exegesis.'¹⁰⁸⁵ Wang Li argues that the phonetic relationship in phonetic borrowing should actually include both initial and rhyme. Solely alliterative syllables without phonetic relationships in the rhyme or solely rhymed syllables without phonetic relationships in the initial do not confirm to the condition of phonetic borrowing in Old Chinese.¹⁰⁸⁶ Accordingly, the phonetic conditions proposed by Duan are not stringent.

5.4.2 Seek Meaning through Sound in Reading Ancient Texts

The paramount principle of the early Chinese script was to use the graph for one word to write other words of similar pronunciation. For texts composed in the Old Chinese period, just in order to decide what the words of a text are, one often has to know which words sounded similar to which at the time the text was written, without the benefit of an alphabetic representation.¹⁰⁸⁷

¹⁰⁸⁵ Hu Pu'an 胡樸安 (1878–1947), *Zhongguo xunguxue shi* 中國訓詁學史 [The History of Chinese Exegesis] (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1983), p. 278.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Wang Li 王力, *Gudai hanyu* 古代漢語 [Ancient Chinese] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), p. 550.

¹⁰⁸⁷ William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 2.

In the early stages of the formation of phonetic compounds, the phonetic element was homophonous with the phonetic compound. This means that characters with the same phonetic element shared the same pronunciation. Consequently, in pre-Qin texts, homophonic substitution frequently occurred between the phonetic element and the phonetic compound, as well as the phonetic compounds with the same phonetic element. For instance, Duan provided the following annotation under the character *she* 捨, noting that ‘*she* 舍 (a lodging house) is often used for 捨 (to let go, to give up) in ancient texts.’¹⁰⁸⁸ This can be exemplified by the sentence ‘*qier shezhi, xiumu buzhe* 契而舍之，朽木不折’ (If you start carving but give up, you cannot cut even a rotting piece of wood in two) from *Xunzi* 荀子.¹⁰⁸⁹ Duan also offered the following annotation under the character *qu* 娶, noting that ‘*qu* 取 (to take) is often used for 娶 (to take a wife) in ancient texts.’¹⁰⁹⁰ An example can be found in the sentence ‘*quqi ruhe* 取妻如何’ (How does one take a wife?) from the *Book of Poetry*, ‘Songs Collected in Bin’.¹⁰⁹¹ The same applies to the character *zhi* 枝 under which Duan offered the following annotation: ‘Branches must divide. The characters *zhi* 枝 (branch) and *qi* 岐 (to divide) can be used interchangeably in ancient times’.¹⁰⁹²

Bernhard Karlgren also referred to the phonetic borrowing between phonetic compounds and their phonetic elements in his work *Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts* and named it ‘Hie-sheng Kia-tsie’ (*xiesheng jiajie* 諧聲假借). He provided examples, such as ‘*yi* 易 (to change) being borrowed for *xi* 錫 (to give), *zhui* 隹 (a bird) being borrowed for *wei* 唯 (a particle),

¹⁰⁸⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 604.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Xunzi*, trans. John Knoblock, vol. I, p. 138.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 619.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Shijing* 詩經 [The Book of Odes], trans. Bernhard Karlgren (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1974), p. 103.

¹⁰⁹² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 251.

sheng 生 (birth) for *xing* 姓 (clan's name).¹⁰⁹³ Liu Shipei posited that ‘in archaic times, the majority of characters were simple graphs, with classifiers added later to form compound characters. Since characters were created, meaning has been borne by sound. Thus, phonetic compounds sharing the same phonetic element often convey similar meanings. Even if the meanings of these phonetic compounds differ, they could still be interchangeably used to represent the same word, as they share identical pronunciations’.¹⁰⁹⁴ Liu gave examples of phonetic borrowing in the ancient texts of the Zhou and Qin dynasties, such as *you* 佑 being used for *you* 祐, *wei* 維 being used for *wei* 惟, *weitu* 委佗 for *weiyi* 委蛇, *hengpi* 橫被 for *guangpi* 廣被.¹⁰⁹⁵

Zhang Shilu 張世祿 (1901–1991) notes that ‘through research on palaeography, it becomes evident that many phonetic compounds are represented by their phonetic elements in the bronze inscriptions and the oracle bone inscriptions, such as *qie* 且 (memorial tablet used for the sacrificial ceremony) being the ancient form of *zu* 祖 (ancestor); *tun* 屯 (difficult) as the ancient form of *chun* 純 (pure); and *shang* 賞 (to reward) as the ancient form of *chang* 償 (to repay)...the ancient scripts (i.e., the phonetic elements) from the Yin (*yinshang* 殷商) and the Zhou dynasties often evolved into phonetic compounds with classifiers added. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the more archaic the period, the fewer scripts there were. The borrowed use of phonetic elements for multiple meanings is inevitable.’¹⁰⁹⁶

The statements presented emphasise the crucial role of the phonetic element in retrieving

¹⁰⁹³ Bernhard Karlgren, *Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts* (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1968), p. 5.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Liu Mengxi, *Modern Chinese Academic Classics*, p. 653. The original Chinese text is: ‘古代字均獨體，後聖繼作，益以所從之形，而合體之字成。然造字之始，既以聲寄義。故兩字所從之聲同，則字義同。即匪相同，亦可互用。’

¹⁰⁹⁵ Liu Mengxi, *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu jingdian*, p. 654.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Zhang Shilu 張世祿 (1901–1991), *Zhongguo yinyunxue shi* 中國音韻學史 [The History of Chinese Phonology] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1984), p. 46.

the orthograph, especially regarding phonetic borrowing between the phonetic element and the phonetic compound, as well as among phonetic compounds sharing the same phonetic element. Galambos concludes that scribes could abbreviate or leave out almost any other part of the character, they could introduce new components, yet they retained the phonetic component in virtually every instance. This realisation reinforces the priority of spoken language (sound) over writing (form), a connection easily forgotten when it comes to Chinese writing.¹⁰⁹⁷ The retention of the phonetic component implies that the primary aspect of a character form, which tied it most intimately to the word it represented, was its sound value.¹⁰⁹⁸

Furthermore, many phonetic compounds within the same *xiesheng* series are cognate words deriving from the same sound and meaning. This underscores the source-indicating feature of the phonetic element. For example, in the sentence ‘*zuru biaofeng* 卒如爍風’ (as quick as a whirlwind) from *Records of the Grand Historian*, ‘Book of Rites’, the character *biao* 爍 (leaping flames) is used for *piao* 飄 (whirlwind).¹⁰⁹⁹ Similarly, in the sentence ‘*fengqi piao* 風其漂女’ (The wind blows you away) from the *Book of Poetry*, ‘Songs Collected in Zheng, Sing Together’, *piao* 漂 (drifting) is used for *piao* 飄 (blowing).¹¹⁰⁰ Characters *biao* 爍 (flickering, gleaming), *piao* 漂 (drifting), and *piao* 飄 (whirlwind, blowing) share the same phonetic element, 票, and are all related to the sense of ‘floating’.¹¹⁰¹ Hence, both 爍 and 漂 can be used for 飄. The homophonic substitution between cognate words of the same *xiesheng* series demonstrates Duan’s principle that ‘characters sharing a given phonetic

¹⁰⁹⁷ Imre Galambos, ‘The Evolution of Chinese Writing Evidence from Newly Excavated Texts (490–221 BC)’, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Imre Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Sima Qian, *Shiji*, ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 243, p. 538.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Maoshi zhengyi*, p. 355.

¹¹⁰¹ Wang Li, *Tongyuan zidian*, p. 228. Yin Jiming, *Hanyu tongyuanci dadian*, vol. 3, p. 1355.

element often share a given meaning’.

Additionally, phonetic borrowing between characters with the same sound frequently occurs in ancient texts, even if they have different phonetic elements. Although the loan character is not semantically related to the orthograph, they represent the same word because of sound identification. Huang Kan once stated: ‘The importance of sound to phonetic borrowing resembles water to fish. Fish cannot live without water, while the problem of phonetic borrowing cannot be solved without the reference to sound. If we know the pronunciation of a loan graph in Old Chinese, we can get the clue to retrieving the orthograph’.¹¹⁰² As Galambos asserts, to avoid the confusion arising from the variability of character structure during the pre-Qin period, the identity of a character is based on the word it represents in writing. Consequently, we should view the character forms of the pre-Qin script as graphical representations of words (i.e., spoken language) rather than variant forms of characters (i.e., written language).¹¹⁰³ In his annotations, Duan demonstrated his insights in identifying the word that a graphical form truly represents in ancient texts. The following sections present examples of Duan’s use of *yinsheng qiuyi* to retrieve the orthograph in homophonic substitutions appearing in ancient texts in his annotations.

5.4.2.1 Recognising Phonetic Borrowing through Phonetic Element

Example 1: In the *Shuowen*, Duan provided the following annotation under the character *jia* 假, noting that ‘for the word 假 in the Chapters “Hymn to King Tang” and “Hymn to Ancestors” from the *Book of Poetry*, Mao noted that “假 means great.” For the word 假 in the

¹¹⁰² Huang Zhuo, *Huang Kan wenzi shengyun xungu biji*, pp. 54–55. The original Chinese text is: ‘假借之關乎音，猶魚之於水也。魚離乎水則困，假借離乎音則絕。故已知一字之音古屬何類，進而求之，則可觸類貫通者矣。’

¹¹⁰³ Imre Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts*, p. 78.

Chapters “Revelry” and “King Cheng’s Progress” from the *Book of Poetry*, Mao explained that “嘏 means great.” This indicates that 假 can be borrowed for 嘏 (great).¹¹⁰⁴ Duan also annotated under the character *gu* 嘏 (great) that ‘假 is explained as “great” in both *Erya* and *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry*. 假 may be borrowed for 嘏.’¹¹⁰⁵ Duan used *Erya* and *Mao’s Commentary* to demonstrate the borrowed use of 假 for 嘏. Since 假 /*kragx/ and 嘏 /*kragx/ share the same phonetic element *jia* 假, they are homonyms in Old Chinese, thus fulfilling the phonetic condition of phonetic borrowing. The homophonic substitution between 假 and 嘏 can be seen in ancient texts. Supporting evidence can also be found in the sentence ‘*xiuqi zhugu* 修其祝嘏’ (The prayers and the benedictions are carefully framed) from the *Book of Rites*, ‘Li Yun 禮運’. Lu Deming noted that ‘嘏’ could also be written as 假’.¹¹⁰⁶

Example 2: In his annotation for the character *liao* 療 (curing) in the *Shuowen*, Duan quoted ‘*mizhi yangyang, keyi leji* 泌之洋洋，可以樂饑’ (The stream in Bi that surges may quench people’s thirst)¹¹⁰⁷ from the *Book of Poetry*, ‘Songs Collected in Chen’ and referred to Zheng Xuan’s annotation that ‘the hungry people could get relief from hunger (*keyi liaoji* 可以樂饑) [when seeing the surging stream in the Bi River]’. Duan noted that 樂 should be read as 療. 療 is originally written as 樂 in the ancient text.¹¹⁰⁸ In his *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng*, Zhu Junsheng also quoted ‘*keyi leji* 可以樂饑’ from the *Book of Poetry*’ and stated that ‘樂 is borrowed for 療.’¹¹⁰⁹ As the phonetic element of 療, 樂 /*nglakw/ can be used for 療 /*lakw/ (curing, relieving) owing to the similarity in sound.

Example 3: In the *Shuowen*, Duan offered the following annotation under the character

¹¹⁰⁴ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 378.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 89.

¹¹⁰⁶ Lu Deming 陸德明 (550–630), *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 [Glosses on the Classics], ed. *Siku quanshu*, vol. 182, p.593.

¹¹⁰⁷ *The Book of Poetry*, trans. Wang Rongpei, p. 237.

¹¹⁰⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 356.

¹¹⁰⁹ Zhu Junsheng, *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 220, p. 423.

ai 𦵑 (to conceal), noting that ‘the character 愛 in the sentence “*aimo zhuzhi* 愛莫助之” (nobody can help him) from the *Book of Poetry*, “Major Odes” is a loan character which is explained as “to hide” in *Mao’s Commentary*. The sentence “*aier bujian* 愛而不見” (She hides herself somewhere) from the *Book of Poetry*, “Songs Collected in Bei, A Shepherdess”¹¹¹⁰ is written as “*aier bujian* 𦵑而不見” in *Dialects*. The original character for the meaning of “covering or hiding” should be 𦵑 with *zhu* 竹 (bamboo) as the classifier, since things are easy to hide in a bamboo grove.’¹¹¹¹ Duan identified the orthograph by analysing the graphic form, which makes it easy to recognise the loan character. He then used the examples from the *Book of Poetry* and an intertextual parallel from *Dialects* to illustrate that 愛 is equivalent to 𦵑 or 𦵑, which means ‘to hide’ in the ancient texts. As the phonetic element, 愛 /*·ədh/ can be used for 𦵑 /*·ədh/ and 𦵑 /*·ədh/ due to sound identification. Wang Niansun also noted in his *Guangya shuzheng* that ‘the characters *ai* 𦵑, *ai* 𦵑, *ai* 𦵑, *ai* 𦵑, and *ai* 愛 can be used interchangeably to denote “to cove or to hide” in ancient times.’¹¹¹²

Example 4: In the *Shuowen*, Duan offered the following annotation under the character *you* 囿 (region), noting that ‘the human emperor divided the whole country into nine regions (*jiuyou* 九囿). 九囿 means *jiuyou* 九有 in *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* as well as *jiuyu* 九域 in *Han Ying’s Illustration of Poetry*. *Yu* 域 is equivalent to 或. The words 或, 有, and 囿 can be used for each other in ancient times.’¹¹¹³ In the *Shuowen*, 域 is recorded as the variant form of 或.¹¹¹⁴ Duan systematically associated 囿 with 有, 域, and 或, which are semantically linked to each other. He also used cross-references from *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* and *Han Ying’s Illustration of Poetry* to exemplify the interchangeable use between 囿, 有, and 域.

¹¹¹⁰ *The Book of Poetry*, trans. Wang Rongpei, p. 73.

¹¹¹¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 200

¹¹¹² Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 153.

¹¹¹³ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 280.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 637.

In addition, Duan offered the following annotation under the character 國 (region, state), noting that ‘或 and 國 can be used for each other in ancient Chinese’.¹¹¹⁵ The borrowed use of 或 for 國 can be verified by the excavated Chu scripts.¹¹¹⁶ 有 /*gwjəgx/ is the phonetic element of 囿 /*gwjəgh/, while 或 /*gwək/ is the phonetic element of 國 /*kwək/ and 域 /*gwjək/. As 有 /*gwjəgx/ and 或 /*gwək/ have the same initial consonant /*gw-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of *zhi* 之 /*-ək/, /*-əg/, they are near homonyms. Thus, 有 can be used for *huo* 或 owing to sound identification. Given the above analysis, 有, 囿, 或, 國, and 域 are near homonyms in Old Chinese and can be used interchangeably when denoting ‘territory or region’. Wang Niansun made a similar statement in his *Guangya shuzheng* that ‘或, 域, and 國 had the same sound and meaning in ancient times.’¹¹¹⁷

Example 5: In the *Shuowen*, Duan offered the following annotation under the character *fang* 方, noting that ‘方 is extended to denote “to compare” (*bifang* 比方), as in the sentence “*zigong fangren* 子貢方人” from the *Analects* ...方 can be borrowed for 旁 which means “wide or vast” (*pu* 溥). The character *pang* 旁 in the New-Text version of the *Book of Documents* is written as 方 in the Old-Text version of the *Book of Documents* and denotes “extensive or broad”.’¹¹¹⁸ Duan also offered the following annotation under the character 謗 (slandering), noting that ‘謗 is to say 旁. 旁 denotes 溥 meaning exaggerating or overstating. In the sentence “*zigong fangren* 子貢方人” from the *Analects*, 方 is borrowed for 謗.’¹¹¹⁹

¹¹¹⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 280.

¹¹¹⁶ Chen Sipeng, *Chuxi jianbo zhong zixing yu yinyi guanxi yanjiu*, p. 12.

¹¹¹⁷ Wang Niansun, *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 320.

¹¹¹⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 408. ‘The texts emerged from within Confucius’ wall were all in old writing, hence they were called the Old-Text version of the *Book of Documents*. The New-Text version was written in the common scribal hand in use during the Han.’ See Duan Yucai, *Guwen Shangshu zhuanyi* 古文尚書撰異 [Variations in the Old-Text Version of the *Book of Documents*], ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu, vol. 46, p. 12. Translation quoted from: David B. Honey, *A History of Chinese Classical Scholarship*, vol. II, p. 114.

¹¹¹⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 97.

Duan clarified the relationship between 方, 旁, 謗, and 溥. He presented the borrowed uses of 方 for 旁 and 謗 in the ancient texts, namely, the *Book of Documents* and the *Analects*. However, there is an inconsistency in Duan's explanation of the word 方 in 'zigong fangren 子貢方人' from the *Analects*. One is the extended meaning of 'comparing'; the other is the borrowed use for 'slandering' (謗).

From the perspective of phonological analysis, 旁 serves as the phonetic element of 謗. 方 serves as the phonetic element of 旁. Hence 方 is the phonetic radical of 謗. Namely, 方 /*pjang/ and 謗 /*pangh/ are near homonyms with the same initial consonant /*p-/ and belong to the same rhyme group of yang 陽 /*-ang/. Moreover, 方 /*pjang/ and 溥 /*phagx/ also have similar pronunciations in Old Chinese. It could be suggested that 方 /*pjang/, 旁 /*bang/, 謗 /*pangh/, and 溥 /*phagx/ originally had similar sounds and were related to the sense of 'extensive or exaggerating'. Later, one of the differentiated meanings of 方 denoting 'to overstate or to spread (by rumour)' is borne by the character 謗. Therefore, 方 is used for 謗 in 'zigong fangren 子貢方人'. The supporting evidence can be seen in Lu Wenchao's 盧文弨 (1717–1795) note that 'in the *Old Analects*, 謗 is written as 方. It is phonetic borrowing based on sound identification.'¹¹²⁰ Moreover, the borrowed use of 方 for 謗 can also be seen in the Chu scripts.¹¹²¹

5.4.2.2 Recognising Phonetic Borrowing through the Sound

Example 1: In the *Shuowen*, Duan provided the following annotation under the character *shen* 伸 (to stretch), noting that:

「伸」古經傳皆作「信」。《周易》：「詘信相感而利生焉」，又「尺蠖之詘，以求

¹¹²⁰ Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717–1795), *Jingdian shiwen kaozheng* 經典釋文考證 [Evidential Research on the Elucidation of the Texts of Canonical Works], ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu, vol. 180, p. 263.

¹¹²¹ Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, p. 260.

信也」，又「引而信之」。韋昭《漢書音義》云：「信，古伸字，謂古文假借字。」……尺蠖，屈伸蟲也。《太平御覽》引作「曲信蟲」。¹¹²²

伸 is often written as 信 in ancient texts. [For instance,] the borrowed use of 信 for 伸 can be found in the sentences ‘*qixin xianggan er lisheng yan* 誠信相感而利生焉’ (Alternation between recoil and stretch brings benefit in constancy), ‘*chihuo zhiqu, yiqiu qixin ye* 尺蠖之屈，以求其信也’ (An inchworm recoils for the purpose of stretch),¹¹²³ and ‘*yiner xin zhi* 引而信之’ (extend to determine [all the sixty-four hexagrams]) from the *Book of Changes*.¹¹²⁴ Wei Zhao’s 韋昭 (204–273) *Pronunciations and Meanings of the History of the Former Han* notes that ‘信 is the ancient form of 伸’. This indicates that 信 is borrowed for 伸 in ancient texts... [The quotation of Xu Shen’s explanation] ‘*qushen chong* 誠申蟲’ (the worm which recoils and stretches) for the word *chihuo* 尺蠖 (inchworm) is written as ‘*qixin chong* 曲信蟲’ in *Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era*.

In addition, Duan offered the following annotation under the character 信, noting that ‘信 is often used for 伸 in ancient texts.’¹¹²⁵ The characters 信 /*sjinh/ and 伸 /*sthjin/ have similar initial consonants with the dental sibilant /*s-/, the same medial /*-j-/, and belong to the same rhyme group of *zhen* 真/*-in/. They have similar pronunciations and thus fulfil the condition of phonetic borrowing. Duan used quotations from the *Book of Changes* and intertextual parallels from the *Shuowen* and *Taiping yulan* as supporting evidence to exemplify the borrowed use of 信 for 伸 in the ancient texts. Lu Deming noted in *Correct Meaning of the Book of Changes* that ‘信 is also written as 伸’.¹¹²⁶ Zhu Junsheng also stated in his *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* that ‘信 can be borrowed for 伸.’¹¹²⁷

Example 2: Duan annotated under the character *yi* 殫 (to die, to vanish) in the *Shuowen* that ‘the character 殫 in the sentence “*yi rong yin* 殫戎殷” from the *Book of Documents* means “to vanish” which is its extended meaning.’ He then referred to the equivalent sentence ‘*yi rong yi* 壹戎衣’ from the *Doctrine of the Mean* and quoted Zheng Xuan’s note that ‘衣 is

¹¹²² Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 381.

¹¹²³ *The Zhou Book of Change*, trans. Fu Huisheng, p. 421.

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 391.

¹¹²⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 93.

¹¹²⁶ *Zhouyi zhengyi*, p. 358.

¹¹²⁷ Zhu Junsheng, *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 221, p. 287.

read as 殷. *Yi rong yi* 壹戎衣 means “once he used military forces to attack the Yin”.’ In terms of the pronunciations in Old Chinese, 衣 /*·jəd/ and 殷 /*·jən/ not only have the same initial consonant /*·/ which is a glottal stop but also have similar finals. Since they meet the sound requirement for phonetic borrowing, 衣 can be used for 殷. In the bronze inscriptions of the early Zhou dynasty, 衣 is used for 殷.¹¹²⁸ However, Duan did not totally rely on Zheng’s commentary as he did not agree with Zheng’s explanation of 壹 as ‘once’. Duan further quoted Guo Zhongshu’s 郭忠恕 (d.977) article ‘Peixi 佩觿’ and pointed out that ‘yi 壹/*·jit/ should be read as yi 殫 /*·idh/ (to die, to vanish).’¹¹²⁹ Duan referred to intertextual parallel ‘yi rong yin 殫戎殷’ from the *Book of Documents* and discerned the homophonic substitutions between 殫 and 壹 as well as 殷 and 衣, and thereby retrieved the orthographs in ‘yi rong yi 壹戎衣’ from the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

Example 3: In his annotation for the character *xuan* 諼 (to deceive) in the *Shuowen*, Duan quoted ‘zhong buke xuan xi 終不可諼兮’ ([Our elegant and accomplished prince] never can be forgotten) from the *Book of Poetry* and used *Mao’s Commentary* to explain 諼 as ‘to forget’.¹¹³⁰ Duan noted that:

此諼蓋蕙之假借。蕙本令人忘憂之艸，引伸之凡忘皆曰蕙。〈伯兮詩〉作「諼艸」，〈淇奧詩〉作「不可諼」，皆假借也。許偁「安得蕙艸」，蓋三家詩也。¹¹³¹

諼 may be borrowed for *xuan* 蕙 (when denoting ‘to forget’). 蕙 originally means a kind of day-lily which can make people forget their sorrows. It is extended to denote ‘to forget’. Regarding the words ‘*xuancao* 諼艸’ (day-lily) in ‘Songs Collected in Wei, My Lord’ and ‘*buke xuan* 不可諼’ (should not forget) in ‘Duke Wu of Wei’, 諼 in both of these cases serves as a loan character [for 蕙]. Xu Shen’s quotation of ‘*ande xuancao*

¹¹²⁸ Zhao Cheng, *Jiagu wenzixue gangyao*, p. 214.

¹¹²⁹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 165.

¹¹³⁰ *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge, vol. I, p. 363.

¹¹³¹ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 96. The three interpretive traditions are generally identified as the New-Text: (1) the Lu 魯 tradition, (2) the Qi 齊, and (3) the Han 韓. The *Mao Poetry* is invariably identified as Old-Text. Both current and historical evidence support the conclusion that there were few differences between the four traditions with regard to either variant characters or arrangement of the text. See Michael Nylan, ‘The Chin Wen/Ku Wen Controversy in Han Times’, *T’oung Pao*, vol. 80 (1994): 97.

安得蕙艸’ (in his explanation of the character 蕙) is from the three interpretive traditions of the *Book of Poetry*.

Duan also noted in his annotation for the character 蕙 that ‘蕙 is equivalent to 蕙 meaning “to forget”’.¹¹³² Duan teased out the original meaning and extended meaning of 蕙. Then he used different schools of the *Book of Poetry* to present the phonetic borrowing between 蕙 and 蕙. In *Guangyun*, it notes that *xuan* 萱 is a variant form of 蕙.¹¹³³ In terms of pronunciation, 萱 (蕙) /*hwajan/ and 蕙 /*hwajan/ are homonyms as they have the same *fanqie* spelling as *fuyuan* 孚袁.¹¹³⁴ Therefore, 蕙, 萱, and 蕙 have the same pronunciation in Old Chinese and can be used interchangeably between one and another when denoting ‘to forget’.

Example 4: In the *Shuowen*, Duan offered the following annotation under the character *kui* 饋, noting that

饋之言歸也。故饋多假歸爲之。《論語》「詠而饋」, 「饋孔子豚」, 「齊人饋女樂」, 古文皆作「饋」, 魯皆作「歸」。鄭皆从古文。《聘禮》: 「歸饗饋五牢」, 鄭云: 「今文歸或爲饋。」¹¹³⁵

饋 is equivalent to *gui* 歸. 歸 (to return) is often used for 饋 meaning ‘to send’. In the sentences ‘*yong er kui* 詠而饋’ (return home singing all the way), ‘*kui kongzi tun* 饋孔子豚’ (sent Confucius a steamed piglet), and ‘*qiren kui nüyue* 齊人饋女樂’ (a band of female musicians was sent by the state of Qi [to the state Lu]), the character 饋 in the *Old Analects* is written as 歸 in the Lu 魯 version of the *Analects*.¹¹³⁶ Zheng Xuan followed the *Old Analects*. He commented under the sentence ‘*gui yongxi wulao* 歸饗饋五牢’ (Supplies of five types of animals, slaughtered and living, were sent to the guests) from *Ceremonials and Rituals*, ‘Interstate Missions’ that ‘the character 歸 is written as 饋 in the New-Text version.’

Duan used cross-referencing to identify the homophonic substitution between 歸 and 饋

¹¹³² Duan Yucan, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 25.


¹¹³³ Chen Pengnian, *Xinjiao songben guangyun*, p. 114.

¹¹³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 114–115.

¹¹³⁵ Duan Yucan, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 223.

¹¹³⁶ The three earliest editions of the *Analects* recorded in the Han bibliographical monographs are the *Old Analects* (*Gulun* 古論), the Qi School text (*Qilun* 齊論), and the Lu School version (*Lulun* 魯論). See David B. Honey, *A History of Chinese Classical Scholarship* (Washington: Academica Press, 2021), vol. I, p. 91.

in the ancient texts. As 饋 /*kwjəd/ and 歸 /*gwjiəd^h/ have similar initial consonants, which are labiovelars, and belong to the same rhyme group of *wei* 微 /*-əd/, they are near homonyms. Their phonetic similarity satisfies the requirement for phonetic borrowing. In his *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng*, Zhu Junsheng also explained under the character 歸 that ‘歸 can be borrowed for 饋.’¹¹³⁷

Example 5: In the *Shuowen*, the character *bu* 不 is explained as ‘a bird flying upwards and not coming down.’ In his annotation for 不, Duan quoted Zheng Xuan’s annotation of ‘*ebu yeye* 萼不煒煒’, noting that ‘不 is used for 柎, which means “calyx”. 不 and 柎 pronounced the same in Old Chinese.’¹¹³⁸ Duan pointed out the homophonic substitution between 不 and 柎 through both Zheng’s note and phonological judgement. 柎 /*pjug/ and 不 /*pjəg/ have the same initial consonant /*p-/ , medial /*-j-/ , and coda /*-g/. They have similar pronunciations in Old Chinese, and thus meet the sound requirement for phonetic borrowing. However, in the oracle bone inscriptions, 不 is written as  , which depicts the shape of the calyx of a flower. 不 is the orthograph of 柎.’¹¹³⁹ According to the oracle bone inscription, we can see that the explanation of 不 in the *Shuowen* is incorrect. Therefore, the meaning of ‘calyx’ is the original meaning of 不 rather than the borrowed use for 柎. Since Duan did not have the access to related palaeographic materials, his judgement of the original meaning of a character is sometimes misled by the *Shuowen*.

The examples provided in section 5.4.2 underscore the significance of sound in analysing phonetic borrowing in ancient texts. As noted by Christoph Harbsmeier, the sound world of Old Chinese will always be indispensable for the study of classical Chinese texts.

¹¹³⁷ Zhu Junsheng, *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng*, ed. *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 221, p. 48.

¹¹³⁸ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 590.

¹¹³⁹ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, vol. 3, p. 2502.

Homophony (similarity of pronunciation that is taken to license phonetic loans in textual criticism) is crucial for textual criticism of all kinds of Chinese writings.¹¹⁴⁰ In addition to assessing the phonetic relationship in phonetic borrowing, Duan used many quotations from ancient texts as supporting evidence for the use of loan characters. As Park notes, ‘The decisive reason for considering loan characters as feasible is that a given case of loan tends to recur a few times within a text, as well as in different texts, both in quotations and in independent usages.’¹¹⁴¹ In his annotations, Duan pointed out over ten thousand cases of phonetic borrowing in ancient texts.¹¹⁴² Duan’s approach of *yinsheng qiuyi* to the exegetical problems presented in the *Duanzhu* is an important reference for later scholars studying ancient texts.

5.5 Summary

In his annotations to the *Shuowen*, Duan analysed the relationships between the glossing words and the glossed words in terms of sounds and meanings and discovered the semantic connections between characters through phonetic analysis. However, certain aspects of his phonetic analysis were found to be inaccurate, and the etymological connections between the glossing words and the glossed words in some word glosses cannot be readily verified. Duan’s insights into the relationship between form, sound, and meaning not only added value to his annotations and made the *Shuowen* more readable, but also inspired later studies of word glosses, including the study of cognate words, polyphonic characters, polysyllabic morphemes, and the distinction of synonymous words.

¹¹⁴⁰ Christoph Harbsmeier, ‘Irrefutable Conjectures. A Review of William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*’, *Journal of Oriental Studies* vol. 64, 2 (2016): 497.

¹¹⁴¹ Haeree Park, ‘Linguistic Approaches to Reading Excavated Manuscripts’, *Asiatische Studien* vol. 63, 4 (2009): 877.

¹¹⁴² Guo Zaiyi, *Xinbian xungu conggao*, p. 361.

In addition, Duan applied *yinsheng qiuyi* and used a rigorous research method to decipher the words in ancient texts and address the issue of phonetic borrowing. He was well aware that the meaning of the word represented by the loan character is indicated by its sound rather than its graphic form. This is due to his full understanding and skilful application of his principles of sound and meaning relationships. Zhao Keqin claims that phonetic borrowing in nature demonstrates the principle that ‘homonyms or near homonyms often have a similar meaning’, in which case the meaning is borrowed.¹¹⁴³ Duan’s annotations serve as an important reference for later scholars to comprehend the usage of characters or words in ancient Chinese and to gain a good understanding of ancient texts. This demonstrates Duan’s contribution in both historical phonology and exegesis.

Drawing on the latest achievements of Chinese philology, such as phonetic reconstructions by modern scholars and the unearthed ancient manuscripts unknown to Duan, this chapter employs numerous examples from the *Shuowen* and the *Duanzhu* to examine the application of Duan’s principles to word glosses from different perspectives, while also identifying the mistakes that Duan made in his annotations. The *Duanzhu* facilitated a better understanding of the nuances of Chinese characters at the lexical level and enabled the grasping of a character’s meaning from an etymological standpoint. However, Duan was hindered by the lack of a convenient phonetic notation, precise analysis of the initial consonants, and the unavailability of newly excavated manuscripts. Some of Duan’s phonetic analyses are considered outdated from a modern perspective. In the final chapter, I attempt to address important side issues of modern developments in Old Chinese morphology that illustrate the gap between Duan and modern scholarship.

¹¹⁴³ Zhao Keqin’s *Gudai hanyu cihuixue*, p. 223.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Duan's Achievements

Chinese characters serve as both acoustic and visual symbols, conveying meaning through both graphic form and sound. Neglecting either aspect can hinder a comprehensive understanding of Chinese characters. Written characters are graphical representations of words of a language, they are meaningful only in reference to the word they have been chosen to represent. Therefore, the word always determines the identity of the character, regardless of its graphical appearance.¹¹⁴⁴ The nature of a word lies in its sound, and thus sound plays a significant role in word glosses. The embedding of meaning in sound is not only the foundation of creating words but also an indicator of explaining words.

During the interaction between Chinese language and characters, the graphic forms of some characters gradually became symbolic and phonetic rather than ideographic. As a result, the forms and meanings of some characters are disconnected, such as loan characters and polysyllabic morphemes. Especially before the standardisation of graphic forms during the Tang period, a word might be represented by different characters, while a polyphonic character might represent different words. Chen Sipeng points out that ‘the case of one word represented by several graphs is even more obvious than that of one graph representing several words.’¹¹⁴⁵ Therefore, seeking meaning solely on the basis of graphic form without taking into account the sound value often makes it impossible to gain a full understanding of the meaning that a character represents in Old Chinese.

¹¹⁴⁴ Imre Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts*, p. 77.

¹¹⁴⁵ Chen Sipeng, *Chuxi jianbo zhong zixing yu yinyi guanxi yanjiu*, p. 13.

In traditional Chinese philology, the concepts of character and word are often confused. It was Qing scholars such as Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, and Wang Niansun who gradually realised that language originated from sound and came into being before characters. A main aim of Qing philologists studying historical phonology was to better understand the Old Chinese in classical texts. They established principles for later scholars to follow and left a rich body of work that served as the foundation for later research. Speaking from his own experience in researching ancient texts, Duan Yucai clearly pointed out the function of historical phonology in exegesis. He initially took the phonetic compounds as fundamental material for the phonological reconstruction of Old Chinese, in addition to the rhymes of the *Book of Poetry*, and formed a basic methodological principle of Old Chinese phonology on which later scholarship was based. He presented his revolutionary findings on historical phonology and division of ancient rhyme groups in his ‘Liushu yinyunbiao’.

In addition to his achievements in Old Chinese phonology, Duan made major contributions to the study of the *Shuowen*. He combined historical phonology with palaeography by systematically relating rhyme groups to the characters. He sought word gloss through both form and sound. Duan clarified the logic behind the construction of a character representing its original meaning, based on Xu Shen’s analysis of graphic form. However, he did not limit himself to Xu Shen’s explanation but further explored ancient meanings through ancient sounds. Duan proposed the theory of *shengyi tongyuan* and showed an incisive recognition and comprehensive analysis of the sound-meaning relationships represented in many aspects. He systematically brought out his insights into these relationships and consistently applied them in word glosses throughout his annotations to the *Shuowen*. He used sound as an indicator to find semantic relationships between words, thereby linking potential

cognate words, tracing etymology, identifying polysyllabic morphemes, and discerning homophonic substitution in ancient texts. In this way, Duan was able to unveil the meaning hidden behind the graphic integument and provided comprehensive and thorough annotations. Hu Qiguang remarks that from Xu Shen to Duan Yucai, the study of Chinese characters changed from the perspective of graphology to linguistics. Accordingly, the methodology changed from explaining sound and meaning through form to explaining form and meaning through sound. Duan's valuable contribution is that he attempted to analyse the characters from a linguistic point of view, seeking form, sound, and meaning in mutual relationships based on sound.¹¹⁴⁶

In addition, Duan emphasised a diachronic view of word glosses. He recognised the evolution of word meanings and the varied uses of words across both ancient and contemporary times. Furthermore, he used a variety of philological materials rather than relying on a single material as supporting evidence for his glosses. His thorough approach and pragmatic attitude made his philological achievements and classical texts studies complementary, which enhanced the contribution of the *Duanzhu*. His aim, I would argue, was to make the *Shuowen* an even more effective, systematic, and comprehensive tool for the study of both philology and classical texts.

Duan's approach covered several aspects of ancient Chinese, including graphology when analysing a character as an individual unit, lexicology when analysing the relationship between words, and exegesis when analysing the use of a word in ancient texts. He carried out holistic research into ancient Chinese lexicology, examining the form, pronunciation, and meaning in an integrated approach.¹¹⁴⁷ Pu Zhizhen claims in her *History of Chinese*

¹¹⁴⁶ Hu Qiguang, *Zhongguo xiaoxue shi*, p. 243.

¹¹⁴⁷ He Mingyong and Jing Peng, *Chinese Lexicology*, p. 133.

Linguistics that Duan preliminarily solved some problems of historical phonology, graphology, exegesis, and lexicology. He was particularly prominent in the field of lexicology. He discussed the relationship between character and word, the relationship between sound and meaning of words, the differentiation of synonymous words, the original, extended, and borrowed meanings of words, and the development of the meaning of a word. Duan's analytical research and theoretical understanding reached a high level in the Qing dynasty. His work is still valuable for today's research on the lexicology and history of the Chinese language.¹¹⁴⁸ As Pu Zhizhen suggests, Duan's diachronic perspective on the form, sound, and meaning of characters, his approach to elucidating meaning through both form and sound, and his rigorous scholarly attitude not only underscore his significance in his era but also provide a valuable reference for contemporary research endeavours.

6.2 Duan's Limitations: Bridging the Gap between Duan and Modern Scholarship

While Duan's work represented a brilliant intellectual achievement, it also had limitations. In addition to the shortcomings discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6, Duan's study of Old Chinese also requires re-examination and updating using modern methods and materials. The invention of the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) in the late 19th-Century has led to the refinement of techniques for phonetic reconstruction of Old Chinese and provides a convenient tool for phonetic notation. Reconstruction of Old Chinese has continued to progress and become more accurate with the aid of historical comparative linguistics of Sino-Tibetan, dialects, and modern linguistic knowledge, which Duan lacked in his time. Moreover, Duan did not have access to the excavated manuscripts as an important new source of data for palaeography and Old Chinese phonology. Armed with an unprecedented number of

¹¹⁴⁸ Pu Zhizhen, *Zhongguo yuyanxue shi*, pp. 368–9.

manuscripts and advanced linguistic knowledge, modern scholars are correcting outdated understandings and folk etymologies.

In the last few decades, modern linguists have made significant advancements across various areas, including historical phonology, etymology, morphology, and palaeography. These advancements have led to a clearer understanding of distinctions in Old and Middle Chinese within the reconstructed systems developed since Duan's pioneering work. It is no longer tenable to rely solely on traditional phonological categories to posit simple approximate or equivalent phonological relationships. The newer systems of reconstructed Old Chinese reveal certain features that suggest previously unseen processes of morphological word derivation, which are beyond the comprehension of Duan Yucui. Contemporary scholarship now approaches word derivation and the relationship between sound and meaning in a different manner, focusing on morphology to discern phonological similarities more subtly. The criteria for establishing etymological links are now much stricter than in Duan's time. Morphological approaches, such as the identification of certain affixes representing specific functions, play an important role in establishing etymological connections between words, reflecting the evolution of linguistics since Duan's era.

6.2.1 Modern Studies in Old Chinese Morphology

With more efficient Old Chinese reconstruction tools and modern linguistic skills, modern scholars such as Baxter and Sagart have a different view of the structure of Old Chinese words, enabling them to separate word stems and affixes, conduct morphological analysis, and delve deeper into etymology.

Morphology, in general, concerns the rules of word-formation, particularly inflection and

derivation. Although these processes are not usually considered present in Chinese on any large scale, a number of morphological functions have been posited for early Chinese and incorporated into reconstructions.¹¹⁴⁹ Sagart, in his work *The Roots of Old Chinese*, provides a comprehensive analysis and hypothesis of morphological processes in Old Chinese and investigates the functions of affixations. He concludes that the morphology of Old Chinese was essentially derivational, making use of affixations. At some point between Old Chinese and Middle Chinese, the loosely attached prefixes were lost, while other affixes clustered with root segments and were reinterpreted as root material.¹¹⁵⁰

Jerry Norman holds a different view, believing that Old Chinese morphemes are almost entirely monosyllabic; moreover, most words are also monomorphemic. Not only is there a total lack of grammatical morphology, but even derivational morphology is very scant. Grammatical relationships were shown either by word order or by the use of independent grammatical particles, rather than by affixes or by internal changes in the word itself. This is a reasonably accurate way of describing Chinese at all of its historical stages. In typological terms, Classical Chinese is an almost perfect example of an isolating language.¹¹⁵¹

The study of derivational affixes represents the cutting edge of Old Chinese morphological research, with many questions still open for debate. Schuessler remarks that ‘the monosyllabic nature of Chinese makes morphological derivational mechanisms far from self-evident, and an Old Chinese reconstructed monosyllable, even with an initial consonant cluster, is so compact that some sceptical linguists reject the idea of segmental morphology in

¹¹⁴⁹ David Prager Branner, ‘On Early Chinese Morphology and its Intellectual History’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* vol. 13, 1 (2003): 45.

¹¹⁵⁰ Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p. 13.

¹¹⁵¹ Jerry Norman, *Chinese*, p. 25, p. 106.

Old Chinese as a matter of principle.’¹¹⁵² As Sagart states in *The Roots of Old Chinese*, ‘It would clearly be premature and excessive at this point to claim knowledge of the entire morphological and phonological systems of Old Chinese. What follows is not the last word on Old Chinese phonology and morphology, but a series of proposals which I have attempted to present as explicitly as possible, so that they can be tested and refuted if they are wrong.’¹¹⁵³

As a matter of fact, this discipline stands as the avant-garde of Chinese historical linguistics today, sometimes coming with very bold hypotheses regarding the character of the language in prehistoric and early historical periods.¹¹⁵⁴ While some aspects of the discussion remain hypothetical and controversial, the contemporary examination of morphology and affixation by modern scholars provides certain value as a supplementary resource and point of reference to Duan’s theory and principles.

6.2.2 Word Derivation by Affixations

Modern scholars such as Mei Tsu-lin, Zheng-Zhang, Baxter, and Sagart believe that morphology of Old Chinese was essentially derivational, using prefixes, infixes, and suffixes. The definitive list of Old Chinese affixes remains subject to debate, but widely recognised ones include prefix */*s-/*, a voicing prefix */*N-/*,¹¹⁵⁵ and suffix */*-s/*. Affixes such as prefixes */*k-/*, */*p-/*, */*m-/*, */*t-/*, and */*q-/*, as well as infix */*-r-/*, are less widely accepted.¹¹⁵⁶

In terms of the widely recognised affixes, initial clusters with the prefix */*s-/* are relatively common. Mei Tsu-lin suggests that */*s-/* served causative, denominative, and

¹¹⁵² Axel Schuessler, Book Review: *The Roots of Old Chinese*, *Language and Linguistics* 1.2 (2000): 257.

¹¹⁵³ Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p. 4.

¹¹⁵⁴ Lukáš Zádřapa, ‘The Ancient Chinese Language’, *Oxford Bibliographies in Chinese Studies*, p. 18.

¹¹⁵⁵ */*N/* may be regarded as a positional allophone of either */*n-/* or */*ŋ-/*. See William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 52.

¹¹⁵⁶ Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p. 14.

directive functions.¹¹⁵⁷ Sagart posits that /*s-/ also allowed verbs to take on an extra argument, playing situational roles such as causer, beneficiary, or instrument. In addition, in many examples, /*s-/ derives nouns out of verbs.¹¹⁵⁸ The /*N-/ prefix typically derived stative intransitive verbs, often out of transitive verbs.¹¹⁵⁹

The suffix /*-s/ is widely accepted and deemed the most productive. Baxter and Sagart provisionally assume that all cases of the post coda /*-s/ are morphologically suffixes, and they have reconstructed several well-supported functions for such a suffix, including (1) deriving nouns from verbs, (2) deriving outwardly directed verbs from stative verbs or adjectives, and (3) deriving verbs from nouns. However, there are still many attested cases of /*-s/ that are not covered by these explanations.¹¹⁶⁰

6.2.3 Word Derivation by Tones

Old Chinese was not tonal. Contemporary scholars such as Mei Tsu-lin, Zheng-Zhang, Baxter, and Sagart posit that tones developed after the Old Chinese period, wherein consonants were lost and accompanying pitch differences became phonologically distinctive: loss of final glottal stop /*-ʔ/ produced the rising tone (*shangsheng* 上聲), and the loss of final /*-s/ produced departing tone (*qusheng* 去聲).¹¹⁶¹ Baxter and Zheng-Zhang note that the final glottal stop /*-ʔ/ may in some cases be a derivational suffix, yet in a majority of cases, it has to be regarded as part of the root.¹¹⁶² In other words, the post codas /*-ʔ/ and /*-s/, which are

¹¹⁵⁷ Mei Tsu-lin, 'The Causative and Denominative Functions of the *s- Prefix in Old Chinese'. *Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Sinology: Section on Linguistics and Palaeography* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1989), pp. 33–51.

¹¹⁵⁸ Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, pp. 70–73.

¹¹⁵⁹ William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, p. 54.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

¹¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 318. The theory of origins of departing tone was originally proposed by André Haudricourt in 'Comment reconstruire le chinois archaïque'. The theory of origins of rising tone was proposed by Mei Tsu-lin in 'Tones and prosody in Middle Chinese and the origin of the rising tone'.

¹¹⁶² Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p. 50.

the sources of the tonal contrasts in Middle Chinese, may be regarded as shifting from segmental to suprasegmental status by the Middle Chinese period.¹¹⁶³

Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 (1914–1995) notes that early in the Eastern Han dynasty, commentators recognised instances of derivation by tone change and phonological alternations between related words written by the same character.¹¹⁶⁴ Derivation by tone change refers to altering the meaning by changing the tone. Tones are also considered to have morphological functions by modern scholars. Schuessler proposes in his *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* that the most common morphological role of rising tone is to derive endoactive words (i.e., introvert and active) from a stem. Departing tone has two morphological functions: one is exoactive (i.e., extrovert, transitive, causative) derivation; the other is exopassive (i.e., passive of transitive or exoactive words) derivation.¹¹⁶⁵

The antiquity of this derivational process was questioned by Qing scholars, who suspected that many such readings, if not all, were created by teachers of the classics in the fifth and sixth centuries CE.¹¹⁶⁶ In his annotation for the character 惡 in the *Shuowen*, Duan referred to the different tones of 惡 when it denotes ‘bad or evil’ and ‘to hate’. Duan contended that in Old Chinese, there were no distinctions between departing tone and entering tone. Later distinctions were arbitrarily made.¹¹⁶⁷ Due to the limitations of his time, Duan did not realise that these different tones resulted from different morphological processes in Old Chinese. The /*-s/ suffix, as the Old Chinese precursor of the departing tone, has a variety of derivational functions, one of which is to derive outwardly directed verbs (*wu* 惡 /*ʔak-s/, to

¹¹⁶³ Zheng-Zhang Shangfang 鄭張尚芳 (1933–2018), *Shanggu yinxi* 上古音系 [Old Chinese Phonology] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2013), pp. 205–220.

¹¹⁶⁴ Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 (1914–1995), ‘*Sisheng bieyi shili* 四聲別義釋例’ [Explained Examples of Derivation by Tone Change], *Wenxue ji*, pp. 81–119.

¹¹⁶⁵ Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, pp. 33–45.

¹¹⁶⁶ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p. 316.

¹¹⁶⁷ Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 516.

hate) out of stative verbs or adjectives (*e* 惡 /*ʔ^sak/, bad, ugly).¹¹⁶⁸

6.3 The Contributions of this Dissertation

This dissertation presents an in-depth study of Duan Yucai's annotations to the *Shuowen jiezi* as a systematic and integrated approach to solving exegetical problems through a discussion of Duan's principles of sound-meaning relationship. Firstly, since the *Shuowen* and the *Duanzhu* are the main subjects of this thesis, extensive excerpts from the *Shuowen* and the *Duanzhu* are presented here in my own translation to illustrate Duan's ideas. By exploring the multifaceted implications of Duan's theory of *shengyi tongyuan* represented in different aspects, my thesis provides translations of many parts of the *Duanzhu*, thus making the inspiring work of this eminent philologist from China's Qing dynasty more accessible to the English-speaking world.

Secondly, this dissertation explores the role of sound in the construction of meaning within both Western and Chinese philology, particularly regarding the origin of language. Sound symbolism suggests that specific phonemes hold correspondences with particular meanings. Additionally, I survey scholarship on the relationship between sound and meaning in the history of the Chinese language.

Thirdly, this dissertation elucidates the intellectual indebtedness of Duan Yucai to his mentor, Dai Zhen. It also conducts a comparative analysis of Duan's contemporary, Wang Niansun, regarding their respective approaches to the method of *yinsheng qiuyi*, as well as the methodologies employed by four specialists in the field of *Shuowen* studies, namely Duan Yucai, Gui Fu, Wang Yun, and Zhu Junsheng. Through this comparative framework, the

¹¹⁶⁸ Baxter-Sagart, *Old Chinese Reconstruction*, version 1.1 (20 September 2014). Accessed 7 May 2024. <https://ocbaxtersagart.lsa.umich.edu/>.

dissertation showcases Duan's significant influence on Qing-era scholarship while assessing his role and contributions within the realm of Chinese historical philology. Additionally, Duan's insightful perspectives and shortcomings in his work are presented to provide an objective evaluation of his scholarly standing.

Fourthly, I systematically analyse the *Duanzhu*, revolving around Duan's principles of sound-meaning relations. This approach allows my dissertation to offer Sinologists a comprehensive understanding of the principles proposed and applied by Duan in his annotations, as well as the rationale behind *shengyi tongyuan*. Additionally, I provide numerous examples to illustrate how Duan employed the method of *yinsheng qiuyi* in word glosses. These examples cover various aspects, including explaining a character based on its phonetic element, tracing the etymology of a word through its sound, distinguishing synonymous characters by their phonetic elements, differentiating sounds and meanings of a polyphonic character, identifying polysyllabic morphemes, and addressing issues related to phonetic borrowing.

In addition, utilising a more sophisticated phonetic reconstruction of Old Chinese and newly unearthed ancient manuscripts, I refine certain annotations made by Duan to enhance their precision. I outline the knowledge gap that separates Duan's work from the advancements made by modern linguists. Particularly, contemporary studies in morphology address issues related to word derivation through tone and affixation, a concept beyond Duan's comprehension, thus underscoring the disparity in the study of Old Chinese between Duan's era and the present.

In conclusion, this thesis critically examines and summarises Duan's innovative insights alongside his limitations, contextualising them within both historical perspectives and modern

scholarship. Academic research can be likened to ascending a staircase, and without Duan's contributions, many of today's endeavours would not have been feasible. Drawing upon his accomplishments, subsequent scholars have made significant progress, utilising more refined phonetic notations, employing scientific linguistic methodologies, and leveraging a wealth of new materials. Only by evaluating Duan's achievements, reflecting on his revolutionary insights as well as his limitations, and integrating them with the knowledge of modern linguistics, can we inherit his strengths, avoid his weaknesses, and propel forward by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely express my respect for the great scholar Duan Yucai. He dedicated over thirty years of time and energy to completing this remarkable work. The *Duanzhu* is not merely a linguistic endeavour; it is also an encyclopaedia, encompassing astronomy, geography, objects, humanities, animals, plants, etc. In his later years, Duan endured poverty and illness, yet he persevered tenaciously, completing this work for posterity. His professional dedication has deeply moved and impressed me. I hope to exert my modest efforts to bring solace to this great scholar through my thesis.

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shuju, 2007)

Appendix I. Glossary of Key Terms

Benyi 本義 (original meaning)

Benyuan zi 本原字 (source character)

Benzi 本字 (orthograph)

Biyin 鼻音 (nasal sound)

Bushou 部首 (classifier)

Chi yin 齒音 (dental sound)

Chitou yin 齒頭音 (dental sibilant sound)

Chongwen 重文 (alternate orthography)

Chunyin 唇音 (labial sound)

Chunchi yin 唇齒音/*Qingchun yin* 輕唇音 (labiodental sound)

Cifa xue 詞法學 (morphology)

Ciyuan xue 詞源學 (etymology)

Cihui xue 詞彙學 (lexicology)

Cizu 詞族 (word family)

Dazhuan 大篆 (big seal script)

Dieyun 疊韻 (Rhymed syllables)

Duoyin zi 多音字 (polyphonous character)

Duoyi de 多義的 (polysemous)

Fanqie 反切 (sinographic spelling)

Gujin zi 古今字 (ancient and modern graphs)

Gusheng 古聲 (Old Chinese initials)

Guwenzi xue 古文字學 (palaeography)

Gu yunbu 古韻部 (Old Chinese rhyme groups)

Guoji yinbiao 國際音標 (IPA, the abbreviation of International Phonetic Alphabet)

Hanxue pai 漢學派 (Han learning school)

Hou seyin 喉塞音 (glottal stop)

Hou yin 喉音 (laryngeal sound)

Huiyi 會意 (associative compound, compound ideograph, semantogram)

Jiagu wen 甲骨文 (oracle-bone script)

Jiajie yi 假借義 (borrowed meaning)

Jiajie zi 假借字 (loan characters/loan graph)

Jieyin 介音 (medial)

Jinwen 金文 (bronze inscription)

Lianmian ci 聯綿詞 (polysyllabic morphemes)

Liushu 六書 (The Six Principles of Chinese Character Formation)

Pingsheng 平聲 (level tone)

Puxue 樸學 (substantial learning)

Qian-Jia xuepai 乾嘉學派 (*Qian-Jia* School)

Qubie zi 區別字 (differentiated character)

Qusheng 去聲 (departing tone)

Qingyin 清音 (voiceless sound)

Rusheng 入聲 (entering tone)

Rusheng yun 入聲韻 (rhymes with voiceless stop codas /*-k/, /*-t/, or /*-p/)

Shangsheng 上聲 (rising tone)

She yin 舌音 (lingual sound)

Sheshang yin 舌上音 (retroflex sound)

Shetou yin 舌頭音 (tongue-head sound)

Shengfu 聲符 (phonetic element, phonophoric element)

Shengmu fuyin 聲母輔音 (initial consonant)

Shengxun 聲訓 (sound gloss or paronomastic gloss)

Shengyi tongyuan 聲義同源 (sound and meaning are from the same source)

Shengyin xiangzheng 聲音象征 (sound symbolism)

Shengyun xue 聲韻學 (historical phonology)

Shiyi de 使役的 (causative)

Shuangsheng 雙聲 (alliterative syllables)

Shuangchun yin 雙唇音/ *Zhongchun yin* 重唇音 (bilabial sound)

Songxue pai 宋學派 (Song learning school)

Suzi 俗字 (popular graph)

Tongyi fuyin ci 同義複音詞 (synonymous disyllabic words)

Wanpai 皖派 (the Wan school)

Wenzi xue 文字學 (philology)

Wenzi yu 文字獄 (literary inquisition)

Wupai 吳派 (the Wu school)

Xiangxing zi 象形字 (pictograph)

Xiaozhuan 小篆 (small seal script)

Xingsheng zi 形聲字 / *xiesheng zi* 諧聲字 (semantic-phonetic compound or phonetic compound)

Xungu xue 訓詁學 (exegesis)

Ya yin 牙音 / *shegen yin* 舌根音 (velar sound)

Yangsheng yun 陽聲韻 (rhymes with nasal codas)

Yinshen yi 引申義 (extended meaning)

Yinsheng qiuyi 因聲求義 (seek meaning through sound)

Yinsheng yun 陰聲韻 (rhymes with no coda or a vocalic coda)

Youwen shuo 右文說 (the *youwen* theory)

Yuanchun shegen yin 圓唇舌根音 (labiovelar sound)

Yunmu 韻母 (final)

Yunwei 韻尾 (coda)

Zhishi zi 指事字 (ideograph)

Zhuanzhu zi 轉注字 (mutually explanatory characters)

Zhuoyin 濁音 (voiced sound)

Zigen 字根 (phonetic radical)

Zimu shuo 字母說 (the theory of character origins)

Appendix II. Principles in the *Duanzhu* Related to *Shengyi tongyuan*

1. 聲與義同源 (Sound and meaning spring from the same source).

Shuowen: 禛，以真受福也。从示，真聲。

Zhen 禛 means ‘to obtain blessing by sincerity’. The character is comprised of *shi* 示 (issuing signs) with *zhen* 真 (sincerity) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 聲與義同源，故諧聲之偏旁多與字義相近，此會意形聲兩兼之字致多也。

《說文》或稱其會意，略其形聲；或稱其形聲，略其會意。雖則省文，實欲互見。不知此，則聲與義隔。¹¹⁶⁹

Sound and meaning spring from the same source. Therefore, the phonetic element is often closely linked to the meaning of the entire character. This is why many characters span both the principles of *huiyi* and *xingsheng*. The *Shuowen* either acknowledges *huiyi* and omits *xingsheng* or acknowledges *xingsheng* and omits *huiyi*. Even if [Xu Shen] omits text in this way, he wants both to be recognised. Failure to realise this results in the separation of sound and meaning.

2. The order of appearance of the form, sound, and meaning of Chinese characters

Shuowen: 詞，意內而言外也。从司言。

Ci 詞 (words) appears as speech outwardly, while expressing thoughts inwardly. The character is comprised of *si* 司 (to supervise) and *yan* 言 (words, speech).

Duanzhu: 意者，文字之義也；言者，文字之聲也。詞者，文字形、聲之合也。

凡許之說形、說聲，皆言外也。有義而後有聲，有聲而後有形，造字之本也。形在而聲在焉，形聲在而義在焉，六藝之學也。¹¹⁷⁰

Yi 意 (thought) implies the meaning of a character, while *yan* 言 (speech) indicates the sound of a character. *Ci* 詞 (word) represents the combination of a character’s form and sound. The form and sound mentioned by Xu Shen pertain to the outward signs. According to the theory, sound came after meaning, and form came after sound, marking the origin of character creation. Once a form is established, sound follows. Once form and sound are in place, meaning naturally emerges. This outlines the process of learning the Six Arts.

3. 凡字之義必得諸字之聲 (The meaning of a character is invariably contained in its sound).

Shuowen: 鎗，鎗鎗也。从金，悤聲。

Cong 鎗 is the word for ‘the sound of a bell ring’. It is comprised of *jin* 金 (metal) with *cong* 悤 as the phonetic.

¹¹⁶⁹ Duan Yucan, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 2.

¹¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 434.

Duanzhu: 囟者多孔，蔥者空中，聰者耳順，義皆相類。凡字之義必得諸字之聲者如此。¹¹⁷¹

Cong 囟 (window in ancient times) is characterised by its multiple holes. *Cong* 蔥 (scallion) suggests hollowness (deriving its name from the tubular shape of its leaves). Meanwhile, *cong* 聰 conveys the concept of ‘acute hearing’ (reflecting the ability of individuals to gather information through auditory senses). The meanings of these homonyms are similar to each other (related to the notion of ‘hollowness’). Thus, it can be inferred that the meaning of a character is invariably contained in its sound.

4. 義存乎音 (The meaning lies in the sound).

Shuowen: 屮，艸木初生也。象丨出形有枝莖也。古文或以爲艸字。讀若徹。

Che 屮 refers to the initial sprouting of grass and trees. The character depicts | emerging with branches and stems. 屮 is also used for *cao* 艸 (grass) in ancient scripts. 屮 reads like *che* 徹.

Duanzhu: 徹，通也，義存乎音。¹¹⁷²

徹 means ‘unobstructed’ (e.g. emerging out of the earth). The meaning lies in the sound.

5. 凡同聲多同義 (Homonyms often have similar meanings).

Shuowen: 嘶，悲聲也。从言，斯省聲。

Si 嘶 means ‘mournful sound’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *si* 斯 as its abbreviated phonetic element.

Duanzhu: 斯，析也。澌，水索也。凡同聲多同義。鍇曰：「今謂馬悲鳴為嘶。」¹¹⁷³

Si 斯 means ‘to split’ (*xi* 析). *Si* 澌 means ‘to dry up’ (*shuisuo* 水索). Homonyms often have similar meanings. Xu Kai noted that ‘*si* 嘶 signifies the neighing of a horse’.

6. 同聲之義必相近 (Homonyms must have similar meanings).

Shuowen: 晤，明也，从日，吾聲。

Wu 晤 means ‘light or clear’. It is comprised of *ri* 日 (sun) with *wu* 吾 (pronoun of me) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 啟之明也。心部之「悟」、寤部之「寤」，皆訓覺。覺亦明也。同聲之義必相近。¹¹⁷⁴

¹¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 717.

¹¹⁷² Ibid, p. 22.

¹¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 101.

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 306.

Wu 悟 means ‘to enlighten someone to be clear about something’. Both ‘*wu* 悟’ (to understand) with the classifier ‘*xin* 心’ (heart-mind) and ‘*wu* 寤’ (awakening) with the classifier ‘*meng* 夢’ (dream) imply ‘becoming aware’, corresponding to the sense of ‘light or clear’. Therefore, homonyms must have similar meanings.

7. 音同義相近也 (Homonyms share similar meanings).

Shuowen: 歟，安氣也。从欠，與聲。

Yu 歟 is defined as ‘to breathe calmly’. It is comprised of *qian* 欠 (to exhale) with *yu* 與 (to give, to grant) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 如趨為安行，騫為馬行疾而徐，音同義相近也。今用為語末之辭，亦取安舒之意，通作與。¹¹⁷⁵

Yu 趨 denotes ‘to walk calmly’. *Yu* 騫 means ‘horse running quickly and then slowing down’. These two characters are homonyms and share similar meanings. Presently, *yu* 歟 is commonly used as a final interrogative particle due to its connotation of calmness.

Yu 歟 is also written as *yu* 與.

8. 音同而義相因也 (Homonyms are semantically connected).

Shuowen: 袒，衣縫解也。

Tan 袒 means ‘ripped seam’.

Duanzhu: 袒為衣縫解，故从衣。組為補縫，故从糸。音同而義相因也。¹¹⁷⁶

Tan 袒 means ‘ripped seam’. Thus, it has *yi* 衣 (clothes) as its classifier. *Zhan* 組 means ‘to mend clothes’ and thus it has *mi* 糸 (silk) as its classifier. As 袒 and 組 are pronounced the same, they are semantically connected.

9. 凡有理之字皆从力 (All the characters designating things with veins have a component 力).

Shuowen: 阨，地理也。从阜，力聲。

Le 阨 denotes ‘the veins in the earth’. It is comprised of *fu* 阜 (mound) with *li* 力 (tendon) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 力者，筋也。筋有脈絡可尋，故凡有理之字皆从力。阨者，地理也。柶者，木理也。泐者，水理也。¹¹⁷⁷

Li 力 means ‘tendon’. Tendons can be traced by their channels and the network vessels. Thus, all the characters designating things with veins have a component –力 (tendon). Likewise, *le* 阨 designates the topology of the land; *li* 柶 designates the texture of wood; and *le* 泐 designates the structure of a river.

¹¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 415.

¹¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 399.

¹¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 738.

10. 凡賁聲字多訓大 (Characters pronounced as ‘fen 賁’ often carry the sense of ‘big or large’).

Shuowen: 鼗，大鼓謂之鼗。鼗八尺而兩面，以鼓軍事。从鼓，卉聲。

Fen 鼗 stands for ‘big drum’. It is about eight feet high and has two sides. It is used for military purposes. The character is comprised of *gu* 鼓 (drum) with *hui* 卉 (general term for plants) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡賁聲字多訓大。如《毛傳》云：「墳，大防也。頌，大首兒。汾，大也」皆是。卉聲與賁聲一也。¹¹⁷⁸

Characters pronounced as ‘fen 賁’ (large, ornate) often carry the sense of ‘big or large’. *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* states that ‘fen 墳 means big dyke.’ The character *ban* 頌 implies ‘big-headed’, while *fen* 汾 means ‘large’. Characters pronounced as ‘hui 卉’ are equivalent to those pronounced as ‘fen 賁’ in conveying the meaning of ‘big’.

11. 凡从皮之字皆有分析之意 (All the characters that use ‘pi 皮’ to indicate pronunciation have the sense of ‘splitting or analysing’).

Shuowen: 詖，辨論也。从言，皮聲。

Pi 詖 means ‘to argue’. It is comprised of *yan* 言 (speech) with *pi* 皮 (skin, fur) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 皮，剝取獸革也。被，析也。凡从皮之字皆有分析之意。故詖為辨論也。¹¹⁷⁹

Pi 皮 is to splice off the animal hide. *Bi* 被 means ‘to break or to separate’. All the characters that use ‘pi 皮’ to indicate pronunciation have the sense of ‘splitting or analysing’. As such, *pi* 詖 implies ‘arguing’ (as arguing requires analysis).

12. 凡从云之字，皆有回轉之義 (All the characters using ‘yun 云’ to indicate pronunciation tend to be associated with the concept of ‘turning over’).

Shuowen: 囿，回也。从口，云聲。

Yun 囿 is explained as ‘turning back’. It is comprised of *wei* 口 (encirclement) with *yun* 云 (cloud) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 雲字下曰：「象雲回轉形。」云字下曰：「轉流也。」凡从云之字，皆有回轉之義。¹¹⁸⁰

¹¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 208.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 91.

¹¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 279.

The annotation for the character *yun* 雲 is ‘resembling a cirriform cloud.’ The explanation for the character *yun* 云 is ‘billows or winding current’. Thus, all the characters using ‘*yun* 云’ to indicate pronunciation tend to be associated with the concept of ‘turning over’.

13. 凡从卑之字，皆取自卑加高之意 (All the characters using ‘*bei* 卑’ to indicate pronunciation have the sense of ‘heightening from the low’).

Shuowen: 埤，增也。从土，卑聲。

Pi 埤 is defined as ‘to add’. It is comprised of *tu* 土 (soil) with *bei* 卑 (low) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 《詩·北門》曰：「政事一埤益我。」《傳》曰：「埤，厚也。」此與會部「餽」、衣部「裨」，音義皆同。……凡从卑之字，皆取自卑加高之意，所謂天道虧盈益謙，君子撝（取）多益寡也。凡形聲中有會意者，例此。¹¹⁸¹

Under the sentence ‘*zhengshi yi biyi wo* 政事一埤益我’ (From the increasing government work, I’m overloaded) from the *Book of Poetry*, *Mao’s Commentary* notes that ‘*pi* 埤 means to increase.’ The sound and meaning of *pi* 埤 are the same as *bi* 餽 (to add) with the classifier ‘*hui* 會’ (to conjoin) and *bi* 裨 (to aid) with the classifier ‘*yi* 衣’ (clothes)……All the characters using ‘*bei* 卑’ (low) to indicate pronunciation have the sense of ‘heightening from the low’. It is what the *Book of Changes* means by saying that ‘the way of heaven is to decrease the plenty and increase the modest. Superior men (*junzi* 君子, meaning a person of noble character with good judgment) take from the plenty and increase the needed.’ The above characters with 卑 as the phonetic element exemplify the phonetic compounds whose formation also applies the method of combining intentions.

14. 凡彡聲字多為濃重 (Characters that use ‘*zhen* 彡’ to indicate pronunciation are often glossed as ‘thick or dense’).

Shuowen: 袵，禪衣也。一曰盛服，从衣，彡聲。

Zhen 袵 is defined as ‘unlined gown’. Another definition of 袵 is ‘embroidered robe’. The character is comprised of *yi* 衣 (clothes) with *zhen* 彡 (thick hair) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 彡本訓稠髮。凡彡聲字多為濃重。……《孟子》：「被袵衣。」袵衣亦當為盛服。¹¹⁸²

The original meaning of 彡 is ‘thick hair’. Characters that use ‘*zhen* 彡’ to indicate pronunciation are often glossed as ‘thick or dense’... 袵 denotes ‘embroidered garments’ in the sentence ‘*pi zhenyi* 被袵衣’ (He wore fine robe) from *Mencius*.

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 696.

¹¹⁸² Ibid, p. 393.

15. 凡从辰之字皆有動意 (All the characters using ‘*chen* 辰’ to denote pronunciation bear the sense of ‘movement’).

Shuowen: 娠，女妊身動也。从女，辰聲。

Shen 娠 denotes ‘foetal movement in a pregnant woman’s belly’. It is comprised of *nü* 女 (woman) with *chen* 辰 (early morning) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡从辰之字皆有動意。震、振是也。妊而身動曰娠。¹¹⁸³

All the characters using ‘*chen* 辰’ to denote pronunciation bear the sense of ‘movement’, such as *zhen* 震 (thunder), *zhen* 振 (to shake), as well as *shen* 娠 meaning ‘foetal movement’.

16. 凡農聲字皆訓厚 (Characters with the phonetic element 農 are all glossed as ‘thick’).

Shuowen: 濃，露多也。从水，農聲。

Nong 濃 signifies ‘thick dew’. It is comprised of *shui* 水 (water) with *nong* 農 (farming) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 釀，厚酒也。衣部曰：「襪，衣厚兒。」凡農聲字皆訓厚。¹¹⁸⁴

Nong 釀 means ‘heavy-flavoured wine’. *Nong* 襪, with the classifier *yi* 衣 (clothes), means ‘thick clothes’. Characters with the phonetic element 農 are all glossed as ‘thick’.

17. 凡丕聲之字皆訓之直而長者 (All the characters that use ‘*jing* 丕’ to indicate pronunciation bear the sense of ‘straight and long’).

Shuowen: 陁，山絕坎也。从阜，丕聲。

Xing 陁 denotes ‘mountain gorge’. It is comprised of *fu* 阜 (mound) with *jing* 丕 (streams running underground) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡丕聲之字皆訓之直而長者。¹¹⁸⁵

All the characters that use ‘*jing* 丕’ to indicate pronunciation bear the sense of ‘straight and long’.

18. 凡从奇之字多訓偏 (Characters using ‘*qi* 奇’ to indicate pronunciation often carry the sense of ‘leaning to one side’).

Shuowen: 齧，齧也。从齒，奇聲。

Yi 齧 is explained as ‘to bite’. It is comprised of *chi* 齒 (teeth) with *qi* 奇 (odd) as the

¹¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 620.

¹¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 564.

¹¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 741.

phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡从奇之字多訓偏，如持訓偏引，齧訓側齧。¹¹⁸⁶

Characters using ‘*qi* 奇’ to indicate pronunciation often carry the sense of ‘leaning to one side’. For example, *ji* 倚 denotes ‘to pull aside’. *Yi* 齧 means ‘to bite on one side of the mouth’.

19. 凡于聲字多訓大 (Characters using ‘*yu* 于’ to indicate pronunciation often have the sense of ‘big or large’).

Shuowen: 芋，大葉實根駭人，故謂之芋也。从艸，于聲。

Yu 芋 (taro) is a kind of plant whose leaves and roots are very big. The character is comprised of *cao* 艸 (grass) with *yu* 于 (to, in) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 口部曰吁，驚也。《毛傳》曰：「訝，大也。」凡于聲字多訓大。芋之為物，葉大根實，二者皆堪駭人，故謂之芋。¹¹⁸⁷

The character *xu* 吁, with the classifier ‘*kou* 口’ (mouth), denotes ‘a tone of voice indicating surprise’. *Mao’s Commentary of Poetry* states: ‘*Xu* 訝 means great.’ Therefore, characters using ‘*yu* 于’ to indicate pronunciation often have the sense of ‘big or large’. Taro is a kind of plant with big leaves and solid roots. Thus, it is called *yu* 芋.

20. 凡夨聲、宛聲字皆取委曲意 (Characters containing the phonetic element *yuan* 夨 or *wan* 宛 are all related to the sense of ‘bent or crooked’).

Shuowen: 夨，轉臥也。

Yuan 夨 denotes ‘to turn over when sleep’.

Duanzhu: 凡夨聲、宛聲字皆取委曲意。¹¹⁸⁸

Characters containing the phonetic element *yuan* 夨 or *wan* 宛 (bent, crooked) are all related to the sense of ‘bent or crooked’.

21. 凡光聲之字多訓光大 (Phonetic compounds with 光 as the phonetic element are often associated with ‘great or big’).

Shuowen: 侏，小兒。從人，光聲。《國語》曰：「侏飯不及壺滄。」

Gong 侏 is defined as ‘the appearance of smallness’. It is comprised of *ren* 人 (people)

¹¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 80.

¹¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 25.

¹¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 318.

with *guang* 光 (light) as the phonetic. *Guoyu* states: A banquet is not as good as the food in the pot.

Duanzhu: 小當作大，字之誤也。凡光聲之字多訓光大，無訓小者。《越語》：「句踐曰：『諺有之曰：觥飯不及壺飧。』」韋云：「觥，大也。」大飯謂盛饌。盛饌未具，不能以虛待之，不及壺飧之救飢疾也。……《韓詩》云：「觥，廓也。」許所據《國語》作「侏」。侏與觥音義同。《廣韻·十一唐》曰：「侏，盛兒」，用韋注。十二庚曰：「侏，小兒」，用《說文》。蓋《說文》之訛久矣。
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The character *xiao* 小 (small) is wrongly written and should be replaced with *da* 大 (big). 光 as the phonetic element is often associated with 'great or big' rather than small. 'Yueyu' (from *Guoyu*) states: 'Gou Jian said: "There is a saying that a banquet (*gongfan* 觥飯) is not as good as the food in the pot". Wei Zhao (204–273) noted: 觥 means 'big'. Big food refers to the banquet. The banquet cannot be prepared quickly, so it is less effective than the food in the pot, which can relieve hunger immediately. *Han Ying's Illustration of Poetry*: 觥 denotes 'broad'. The version of *Guoyu* quoted by Xu Shen used 侏. 侏 and 觥 have the same sound and meaning. In the eleventh rhyme group of *tang* 唐 from *Guangyun*, 侏 is explained as 'rich or abundant', aligning with Wei's note. In the twelfth rhyme group of *geng* 庚 from *Guangyun*, 侏 is explained as 'small', aligning with the *Shuowen*. The explanation in the *Shuowen* has long been wrong.

22. 凡金聲、今聲之字皆有禁制之義 (All the characters containing the phonetic element 'jin 金' or 'jin 今') are associated with the concept of 'forbidding').

Shuowen: 袷，交衽也。从衣，金聲。

Jin 袷 denotes 'collar or lapel of the coat'. It is comprised of *yi* 衣 (clothes) with *jin* 金 (gold) as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 凡「金」聲，「今」聲之字皆有禁制之義。¹¹⁹⁰

All the characters containing the phonetic element 'jin 金' (gold) or 'jin 今' (today) are associated with the concept of 'forbidding' (*jin* 禁).

23. 凡言亦聲者，會意兼形聲也 (All instances where 'the component also stands for the sound' indicates that the character is constructed based on both the principles of combining intentions and shaping sound).

Shuowen: 吏，治人者也。从一，从史，史亦聲。

¹¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 382.

¹¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 394.

Li 吏 means the person who administers (*zhi* 治) people. The character is composed of *yi* 一 (one) and *shi* 史 (official historian). 史 also stands for the sound.

Duanzhu: 治與吏同在第一部。此亦以同部疊韻為訓也……凡言亦聲者，會意兼形聲也。凡字有用六書之一者，有兼六書之二者。¹¹⁹¹

吏 and 治 both belong to the first rhyme group (*zhi* 之) in Duan's phonological system of Old Chinese. Thus, 吏 /*ljəgh/ is interpreted by a rhymed syllable (as *zhi* 治 /*drjəgh/)...All instances where 'the component also stands for the sound' indicates that the character is constructed based on both the principles of combining intentions (*huiyi*) and shaping sound (*xingsheng*). Some characters are constructed by one principle of *liushu*, while others are concurrently constructed by two principles of *liushu*.

24. 形聲見會意 (The phonetic compound spans both the principles of shaping sound and combining intentions).

Shuowen: 蓊，華盛。从艸，爾聲。

Er 蓊 denotes 'luxuriant growth of a flower'. It is comprised of *cao* 艸 (grass) with *er* 爾 as the phonetic.

Duanzhu: 此以形聲見會意，蓊為華盛，灑為水盛。¹¹⁹²

The phonetic compound 蓊 spans both the principles of shaping sound and combining intentions. *Er* 蓊 denotes 'luxuriant growth of flower', while *mi* 灑 means 'plenty of water'.

¹¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 319.

¹¹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 38.